

THE HISTORY &
ARTS OF THE
DOMINATRIX



ANNE O NOMIS

— FIRST EDITION —

Special format that pays tribute to the Victorian 'forbidden book'

With illustrations from Archaeology, Flagellant Governesses of the
Seventeenth to Nineteenth Century, Bizarre Ladies of the
Twentieth Century Underground and the Seven Realm Arts



The History & Arts of the Dominatrix



Anne O Nomis

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Preface

My journey into the world of the Dominatrix began in Melbourne, Australia, five years ago. The inner-city suburb of Fitzroy was then the domain of the city's Dominatrices. A tramline makes a path through the suburb's heart, down the length of Brunswick Street, lined with cafés, boutique stores and cocktail bars. Just a few minutes walk from the main street were two dungeon establishments, discreetly located within Victorian villas on leafy side streets.

At the time, I was managing a large design showroom, the car park entrance of which was opposite one of the dungeon establishments. My male work colleagues would be on the lookout for the arrival or departure of one of these intriguing ladies, passing through the tall front gate, carrying a duffle bag slung over shoulder, stuffed to the brim.

The Dominatrices of Fitzroy then formed part of the cultural geography of place. Stiletto high-heel boots clicked down Fitzroy footpaths in confident strides. Each dungeon accommodated around a dozen Dominatrices. You could on occasion catch a glimpse of them at local vendors, in Atomica Coffee, in Black Pearl bar and in Polly Lounge. Indeed the latter had a cocktail list that included a 'Mistress' and 'Red Stiletto' drink, in a seeming nod to its clientele, who often frequented the bar after work.

I was in Polly Lounge bar one night with friends, lounging on velvet chaises surrounded by Venus sculptures and Pre-Raphaelite paintings; when on the seating area to my right, a woman ordered her companion to kiss her foot.

'Kiss my foot, slave', is exactly what she said. He dropped to the floor, obediently, to comply, kissing the toe of her foot in broad daylight. Actually, I lie, it was chandelier light, but you get the picture. I was shocked, amused and intrigued all at once! As were my

friends.

The opportunity to learn more presented itself when I was invited to a birthday party of one of the Dominatrices. It was held on Fitzroy's Gertrude Street – a night fuelled by 'dirty Russian martinis'. I met around ten Dominatrices, all of whom worked in the same dungeon. What startled me was learning about their backgrounds and 'other' occupations. One was a court and police translator who spoke seven languages. One was a former children's educator. One was a trapeze artist in the circus. Another was studying Chinese medicine and acupuncture. While another was studying permaculture and irrigation of desert environments. These were the kind of women you would love at a dinner party. Intelligent, articulate and compelling, with an open-minded and independent perspective on the world. Fascinating.

I asked them about the history of the Dominatrix, how long '*She*' had been around. They didn't know themselves. One thought the Dominatrix was a twentieth-century phenomenon, a kind of post-war evolution that paralleled women's sexual liberation. Another told me it went back to Victorian English times and school discipline. I asked if they knew of a book on the topic. Heads nodded no, no, there's no book.¹ Shrugs of shoulders.

Some things happened within the intertwining period, not all of which I am able to share due to contractual restrictions in a blue folder. To provide some sense of background, however, my father had cancer, and I was thrown deep into grief as it progressed and worsened, while simultaneously seeking out for him the best medical treatment available in the more specialised hospitals overseas and offering all my emotional support as best I could. I had also moved jobs and felt very unchallenged and underutilised in my new role. A combination of immense grief in my personal life, and boredom in my working life. Ripe soil for the growth of an unusual flower.

I had a blackboard in my kitchen with a quote from Katherine Mansfield (the short story writer and expatriate New Zealander). Eating my breakfast each morning, I would look up and ingest its words along with my toast and coffee:

Risk! Risk anything!
Care no more for the opinions of others, for those voices.
Do the hardest thing on earth for you.
Act for yourself. Face the truth.

If people spend their lives worrying too much about what other people think, proximity to death breaks down some of those absorptions. And as one of my senior friends told me, 'we're all fertilizer for grass, in the end. You don't regret things you've done in life so much as things you *didn't* do, the opportunities you didn't take.'

I wanted to take up the challenge, and write the book on the Dominatrix. And as I was facing dark fears of losing one of my closest family members to cancer, other worries such as what other people would think began to pale in comparison of magnitude.

The appeal of the dungeon was that of an 'other world' realm. Learning about the Dominatrix promised insight into matters of submission, suffering, acceptance and the secrets of people's deepest desires. There was also something about the discipline and facing of fear in the dungeon, which I wanted (or perhaps needed) at that time.

The decision to write on their craft would change my path forever, leading me into a clandestine double life, of days spent at my job and evenings spent learning about the arts of these women. A year of corsets, cages, whips ... and inevitably of death. After being soaked in grief and loss, and processing through it, I finally found the courage to begin living again. To throw in my boring unstimulating job, to move to Europe and study a Master's degree in the field I was most passionate about to my core being, and to simultaneously complete my research on the Dominatrix.

My university department turned out to be located on Gordon Square, where the subversive Bloomsbury Group of artists and writers once frequented. I was within a few blocks of the British Museum in one direction, and the British Library in the other. I was never far either from the London dungeons in Marylebone. Most were located on a lower-ground basement level, metaphorically as well as literally underground, shutting out sight, light and sound from the outside

world. In the evenings, London offered a myriad of fetish events, crossing over into subcultures of the Gothic scene, masquerade parties, Torture Garden, play parties, Rubber Balls, Social ‘Munches’ and ‘Crunches’ (as they are variously known).

Through these interconnections, I had privileged access to all the study material and personalities I could wish for to embark on my project. I became friends with some of the world’s most famous Dominatrices, and well regarded within their social circle.

My university studies and book were two distinctly separate projects. Or at least so I thought. For as I came across the ancient Goddess of Mesopotamia in my studies, I also came to encounter a ‘Dominatrix’ Goddess named Inanna. She was the patron deity of the world’s major early city, Uruk (also known as Warka). It is from here that the world’s first writing system has its origins, and early monumental-scale architecture. In a case of the ‘Dominatrix and the City’, Inanna activated sexuality, virility, fertility, bounty and battle success for the benefit of her city. Her religion supported the development of craft wisdom in Uruk, and within mythology she acquires all the ‘*mes*’ for her city – the civilisation powers, which included areas of wisdom, battle arts, craft knowledge, writing, and extended to sexual arts. Human civilisation as we know it, was bound tightly to a Dominatrix Goddess.

Inanna was depicted with the symbol of coiled reed columns linked to the storehouse and sheepfold, and was connected to the star of Venus and star-rosette, and to the lion. In ancient texts, Inanna (or Ishtar as she is known in Akkadian) has a mysterious implement called a *keppû*, used in rituals that appear to relate to domination display. Then there is the hymn to Inanna as ‘Lady of the Largest Heart’, in which Dominatrix rituals take place, involving gender transformation, punishment, pain, lamentation and ecstasy. I could hardly believe what I was reading. This hymn was linked to a historical woman, whose name is recorded in the first-person, she speaks, ‘I Enheduanna ...’ This woman, Enheduanna, was a powerful high *En*-Priestess, as well as the daughter of King Sargon, and thus a princess. She was also devoted to the Goddess Inanna, and she seems

to have either written poetry or edited poetry in dedication to Inanna. If the former, that she wrote the hymn (as many experts believe), Enheduanna is the world's first recorded author known in history.

Later religious practices to the Goddess Artemis Orthia of Sparta featured whipping as part of initiation rites of young men. Flagellation rituals appeared to have formed part of a number of fertility and initiation rites within the ancient Mediterranean, and a winged Priestess is depicted whipping a female initiate on the walls of the Villa of Mysteries in Pompeii.

Educated on the sacred roots of the Dominatrix rituals from my studies, I sought to research the secular professional craft within history. This proved initially to be more elusive than I imagined. Dominatrices operate 'between the cracks', and no signage ever marked their dungeon door. They are anonymous and pseudonymous, adopting a Mistress 'stage name', and an alter ego with it, a super-self rather than a 'false' self. Upon retirement, Dominatrices disappear into thin air, or so it would seem. Shutting-up shop, with no contact address nor 'real' (legal) name to track them down under. In the 1970s era of fetish magazine advertising, their photographs and names are at least preserved in this medium, but before this time there are few records of their existence. Many of the purported images of early Dominatrices of the twentieth century turned out to be just women staged in poses and scenes for commercial photographers producing erotica and fetish images for sale.

Real Dominatrices of the early- and mid-twentieth century kept a very low profile. Advertising was through little cards for a Dominant Lady placed in tobacconist windows in Soho, and in telephone boxes. Referrals were passed on by whispered word-of-mouth amongst fellow seekers of female authority. Some Dominatrices risked published advertisement in print medium, and where they did so, they would veil their occupation in carefully selected language, marketing themselves as a 'Strict Disciplinarian' School Mistress or Governess.

One of the most useful leads to finding out how these women practiced their secretive craft came from fetish magazine editors, who

had visited them and were connected with their clients within the underground scene. One magazine editor, David Jackson, worked on a unique archive that he calls the 'Domina Files', documenting knowledge of early Dominatrices, most of whom were deceased. Without Jackson's effort, knowledge of these women would otherwise have been lost to history, most particularly those early practitioners of the 1950s and 1960s in the days before the fetish magazine industry advertising had got into swing.

In England, the practicing Dominatrices would send clients to John Sutcliffe of *AtomAge* for fetish attire and have custom catsuits made up, in the same workrooms that constructed outfits for the television series, *The Avengers*.

In the US, the small number of practicing Dominatrices were known to slaves by discreet word-of-mouth. Contacting a Dominatrix in real life to arrange a session involved 'real cloak and dagger stuff', as one slave put it. Practitioners and their clients were often linked in a web of interconnected private circles and acquaintances, by clandestine meetings and underground mail-order magazines – whose editors were frequently persecuted or prosecuted in the era. The US Postal Service and law enforcement worked side-by-side in their 'obscenity' investigations.

One Dutch Dominatrix in the US, Monique von Cleef, found herself the subject of a collaborative postal service and police operation raid on her house in Newark, New Jersey, just days before Christmas of 1965. The raid would make front-page headlines around the US, with photos of detectives brandishing Von Cleef's whips for the camera. Her client list was handed over to the FBI, and rooms of possessions carted off. Von Cleef was sent to jail for four months, but later won the case before the Supreme Court, which found the police had abused their powers in their search-and-seizure.

By this time, Von Cleef moved to The Hague, which was one of the capitals of female domination in the 1970s, catering to the politicians, diplomats and lawyers located in or visiting the city. Dominatrices elsewhere adapted to local conditions and law enforcement, variously taking out a window in a sex strip, differentiated in their offerings

and well covered-up in their fetish clothing, surrounded by whips and equipment. Some preferred to locate themselves away from the mainstream sex industry, discreetly based over a shop or in a residential location, with the space and privacy to have a large fit-out of customised bondage furniture and specialist equipment.

The twentieth century was a very interesting era, during which the term 'Dominatrix' was first coined and taken up into popular use. The occupation itself, however, went back much further in history. Only how to trace it? After making enquiries, I was soon on the trail of prints and 'forbidden books' of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, which are the main source of fragmentary information on the 'Governess' Dominatrices of the period.

Many of these erotic books incorporating flagellation were collected by Henry Spencer Ashbee. He was a man who appeared to the outside world to be the consummate Victorian gentleman, but hid a secret erotomania. Indeed so extensive was Ashbee's collection of erotica, that he was compelled to take out rooms in Gray's Inn Square in Holburn to accommodate his numerous volumes. Ashbee went on to author and privately publish a bibliographic index of erotic books, titled *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (Index of Forbidden Books) under the pseudonym of Pisanus Fraxi. It contains some of the most important historical material on the Dominatrices of the era.

Upon his death, Ashbee bequeathed his books to the British Museum. His collection of 'forbidden books' went into the museum's infamous 'Private Case'. To access the 'Private Case', however, one used to have to be an upper-class gentleman. Women and the lower classes were protected (i.e. banned) from the Private Case books, as it was believed they would corrupt. However, in more recent decades and changing social values, the books were moved across to the British Library's 'Rare Books' collection, where I sought them out.

Although technically accessible to the public, Ashbee's own personal copy of his *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* is a restricted-access item, due to its fragility, age, rarity and condition, rather than its taboo contents. I had to apply for special permission in writing from curators to view the book. Being that I was only too aware of the

importance of viewing this volume, I wrote a substantive access application, outlining my research interests and academic credentials. Thankfully, the British Library consented several days later, and a viewing time slot was designated to me.

One must strip oneself of all possessions, bags and coats, before entering the British Library's Rare Books Reading Room. Entering only with a clear see-through plastic bag, laptop and pencils (no pens), past security guards at the entrance and exit. Books are called up from the deep, via computer catalogues, and retrieved from the vaults. After anticipated waiting, they are eventually delivered at a counter desk, an altar, for collection. If the book is particularly rare or valued, it can only be viewed at designated desks, under security camera surveillance.

Travelling from a nearby dungeon to the British Library Reading Rooms emphasised for me the fetish qualities of rare books; similarly kept underground, precious, material in their qualities, leafed, touched and treasured.

Ashbee was in fact a book fetishist, let's not mince words, along with, I suspect, most of those working in the British Library, drawn to such a profession. I was converted to their religion that day, turning the pages of Ashbee's own beautiful volume of the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, with an important handwritten letter by Frederick Hankey interleaved in its pages, describing all the Governess Dominatrices of the era preceding. A drawing of a whipping apparatus, designed by Governess Dominatrix Theresa Berkley, is also reproduced in Ashbee's book.

It was an exquisitely poignant moment, reading about historical Dominatrices, in a book that had, for decades, been denied from access to women, lest it corrupt. Oh the irony – a bit late for that, I'd say.

I also located an important book from an earlier era of the eighteenth century, in which 'beautiful ladies' were offering *Fashionable Lectures Delivered With Birch Discipline*, in roles of Step-Mother or Governess within theatrically staged role-plays. In a clever form of marketing tie-in, female flagellants were promoted by the

book. Its frontispiece contains the names of 57 women, many of whom went on to become the most famous courtesans and beauties of their era in England. Courtesans such as Kitty Fisher, Fanny Murray, Lucy Cooper, Nancy Parsons, Peg Woffington, to name but a few. These ‘birch disciplinarians’ became well known and immortalised by artists in paintings and prints, which hang in public art collections and stately homes around the world.

With flagellation prints sourced from the British Museum and even the Library of Congress in Washington DC, my book was beginning to take shape. It was also turning into one of those projects that had you any idea of the work involved, one would never have started. The topic was made all the more challenging by the fact that there was so little written on the Dominatrix, and therefore so much of the research was original. There were numerous books on other subjects such as the Japanese geisha or the French courtesans. Why was there so little on the Dominatrix?

The reason I’m sure – aside from the research challenges – is because of the secretive, subversive and taboo nature of the Dominatrix’s domain. The Dominatrix is an archetype of *female sexual power*, and those three words together form one of the most loaded groupings imaginable, in a world dominated by big patriarchal religions such as Christianity and Islam, which have sought to enforce women’s obedience, submission and modesty.

The moral conventions restraining and safeguarding women’s sexuality have played out largely in parallel to private property and patriarchal control, designed to guarantee certainty of paternity and investment in offspring. Such codes are inherently territorial. They are based around land and property, of which women were considered to be property. Patriarchal religion reinforced moral codes aimed at ensuring women’s chastity before marriage, fidelity within marriage and submission to her husband, while the obligations on males were the reciprocal exchange of security, protection and invested provision of his wife and family. Women were meant to be somewhat weak and submissive creatures, and men to be strong providers; this created unnatural pressures on both, repressing

natures and desires. The suffragette movement to establish the vote for women was perceived as revolutionary and subversive in its time, challenging long-established gender and power positions.

The Dominatrix upholds the woman in control, wielding her sexual power over men, who are at her mercy. The long history of the Dominatrix suggests that there is something very important, and necessary, to her role in society. The image of a powerful sexual woman to worship. Dealing with fetish, receiving and embracing alternative sexual identities, overturning and offering relief from fixed social roles, holding knowledge on psychological states of submission and ecstasy.

The Dominatrix operates along civilisation's fault lines, dancing along the liminal edges where its floating crust drops into a bubbling magma of underground desire. A chaotic and flowing heat, which we seek to suppress within society and within ourselves, frightened by its power and potentially destructive properties. (We paint it as Dante's Inferno, a fiery hell, we rightly fear to read.)

We need, however, an amount of heat, gases and minerals to be brought to the surface we inhabit. And indeed the Dominatrix taps into this world of suppressed desires and identities, relieving its pressures. She not only plays out fantasy, but raises jewels of wisdom on self-knowledge, suffering, ecstasy, acceptance, mercy and wisdom. She unites the heavenly with the base, for there is equally the earthy, bodily, sexual and the human, in her work.

The Dominatrix applies a combination of intuition and insight into her practices. By her open mind and heart, she attracts a variety of followers with different nuances. She draws upon her deep understanding of the psyche, sexuality, human desires and needs, along with her practical skills, expertise, specialist tools and equipment to perform her craft.

Before I could complete the book, I had to sit with and consider how to describe her practices in a manner more cohesive than an alphabetical A to Z index, or dropped into the catch-all term of 'BDSM'. What I came up with, after much careful consideration, was the classification of 'Seven Realm Arts'. As best I was able, these

practices go to the heart of the Dominatrix's craft.

So taboo are these, that when it came time to take the book forward to print, publishers wanted to expurgate significant sections by way of censorship. Doubts were raised over whether it would be possible to obtain permissions from the world's highest museums to reproduce artwork from their collections in a book on the Dominatrix. Publishers also didn't want to incur the costs associated with image permissions and colour plates.

Disheartening though this was to hear, I pushed ahead with the project the way I originally conceived of it. I applied for permissions to reproduce the illustrations and important archival material from each museum in turn. I found an independent private publishing company, with whom I had an affinity on vision and aesthetic. And one by one, each and every museum I sent a request for imaging permissions, accepted my proposal.

This meant the book could go ahead with all the important artworks and historical material, gathered from the British Museum, British Library, Iraq Museum, Fitzwilliam Museum in Cambridge, Oriental Institute of Chicago, Yale Center for British Art, Penn Museum, and so on. These sit alongside the vintage fetish images of historic Dominatrices, and contemporary art on the modern-day Dominatrix to elucidate her practices. Driven by a conviction that it was an important publication to exist in libraries and in the collective knowledge pool, it has come to be printed with the material it deserves to contain.

Amusingly and ironically, it's also ended up as a 'forbidden book'. Like many of the historical forbidden books, it has been privately printed with colour plate images, risqué and subversive content, under a pseudonym (of Anne O Nomis, a wordplay on 'anonymous').

The print edition revives qualities of the traditional craft of the book, and its delicious tactile appeal, quarter-bound in arlin. It should be well suited to libraries, collectors and book fetishists alike. I'm sure Ashbee will be smiling contentedly down from the heavens with delight. (Or waving up from hell, where he's enjoying himself, whichever the case may be.)

It is a fitting end to this journey, and I want to express a huge thank you to everyone involved in aiding me to see the book into existence.

I dedicate the book to all Dominatrices, their whip-wielding forebears throughout history, and to those who have laid themselves bare at Her feet.

Anne O Nomis, 2013

Endnote

- 1 This is the first book published on the history of the Dominatrix. Some of the most utilized books on BDSM practices are: Wiseman, J. *SM101: A Realistic Introduction* (US: Greenery Press, 1997) and Miller, P. and Devon, M. *Screw the Roses, Send Me the Thorns: The Romance and Sexual Sorcery of Sadomasochism* (UK: Mystic Rose Books, 2002). On the topic of female lifestyle/domestic domination, see Powers, Mistress Lorelei, *The Mistress Manual: The Good Girl's Guide to Female Dominance* (US: Greenery Press, 2001) and Sutton, E. *Female Domination: An Exploration of the Male Desire for Loving Female Authority* (Lulu Books, 2003). An academic sociological perspective on the professional Dominatrix was recently published by Lindemann, D. *Gender, Eroticism and Control in the Dungeon* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012).

A Warning About Language

This book includes adult themes in relation to sexuality, fetish and practices of BDSM (Bondage and Discipline [B&D], Domination/submission [D/s], and Sadism and Masochism [S/M]). It is suitable for mature, open-minded readers. Some of the writing is inevitably erotic or explicit in content.

In defiance of the conventions of English language, you will see a lot of capitalisation in the spelling of Dominatrices, Goddesses, 'Her' and 'She'. This may be jarring for some, irritating to others, regarded as incorrect by many. The capitalisation, however, is intentional. Just as the Christian 'God' is capitalised, so too are the 'Goddesses' here.

One of the challenges of writing a book about Dominatrices is that the English language does not have feminine equivalents for some words that exist in masculine form. In English, we use the word 'mastery' to refer to the command and possession of skills, and the person who achieves this is a 'master'. The word 'mistress' does not have the equivocal meaning in English, nor is there a word 'mistressery'. (And perhaps there should be!)

You'll see some 'odd' looking ideas and expressions, and translations from ancient languages that have been flavoured by different views on female power and sexuality than your own. In some cases, ancient words don't have a nice, simple equivalent in modern-day English. (In ancient Sumerian, for example, 'Nin' means Lady, Priestess, Proprietress, Mistress, Queen [in approximate translation].) I've tried, where possible, to explain these as best I can in the language that's accessible. I make no apologies, however, for the initial jarring effect of reading about women who are *capitalised* with power.

Eventually, you shall submit to 'Her' language and control over this book.

Chapter I

The Ancient Dominatrix Goddess and Her Priestess Initiates

Dominatrix rituals date back thousands of years, to sacred practices of Goddess religion. Archaeologists have uncovered texts written in cuneiform script on clay tablets that describe rites carried out on initiates involving gender transformations, punishment, pain and ecstasy. These rituals were practised in honour of a ‘Dominatrix Goddess’ named ‘Inanna’ (‘Ishtar’ in Akkadian). She was a Goddess of ‘fearsome divine powers’, who held domination over libido, vigour, allure, and battle power.

The ancient hymns exalting the Goddess Inanna’s Dominatrix traits are linked back to an historical high *En*-Priestess named Enheduanna, who was the daughter of King Sargon, and lived around the time of 2285–2250 BCE. She speaks in the first-person within one of the major Dominatrix hymns, and is believed to be the first author recorded in human history.¹

The Goddess Inanna, who is honoured in the hymns, was an ancient Goddess of the grainhouse and the Star of Venus. She promoted vigour, fertility, production and reproduction, increasing population and success in ancient civilisation – the first writing system and monumental architecture emerging from the Goddess precinct.

This is the story of civilisation that you weren’t taught at school ... a tale of the Dominatrix, sex and the ancient city.

The Dominatrix, Sex and the (ancient) City

The body of ‘Dominatrix literature’ comes in the form of religious

hymns to a Goddess named Inanna. She was the major female deity in ancient Mesopotamia, the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers, in what is modern-day Iraq. This region was part of the 'fertile crescent', where civilisation flourished, and the hallmarks we associate with civilisation developed: writing, administration systems, monumental architecture, complex irrigation systems, grain surpluses, a city-sized population (upwards of 50,000).

Inanna held reign over the major city of the time, the city of Uruk (also known as 'Warka', and 'Erech' in biblical texts). At around 3000 BCE, Uruk was at its peak. Its population had reached city size. Within the city's central heart was the Goddess Inanna's precinct, known as the 'Eanna', where the temple buildings were located and the city's administration and crafts carried out. It is from the Goddess's Eanna district that the world's first writing system emerged. It was used initially for administration, and as it developed – for recording king lists, religious hymns, myths and the 'Epic of Gilgamesh'. It was also in the Eanna district that archaeologists found the first examples of monumental-scale architecture.

Most people are, however, unaware that these 'hallmarks of civilisation' developed from a Goddess-held area – a Goddess whose power was sexual. It is attributable to the conservative 'leftovers' of Victorian ideology and the clash of religious values in the major modern religions (Christianity, Judaism and Islam) that this story is not well known or told.

Archaeologists have excavated parts of the ancient city of Uruk (or Warka), and amongst the finds there was the first life-sized sculpture of a human face ever found. It was the marble head of a woman, a sculpture that was named the *Lady of Warka*. This 'Lady' is believed to represent the Goddess Inanna herself (see **Figure 1**).



Figure 1 *The Lady of Warka*, c. 3100 BCE. Marble, 21.2 cm. Iraq Museum. [Believed to depict the head of the Goddess Inanna.]

What did the Goddess Inanna look like? Like a Dominatrix of course. Inanna wears a stern expression, staring out and looking severe. She would once have been beautifully adorned with inlaid eyes of precious stone, a hairpiece wig fixed to the top of her head, painted with make-up and black kohl eyeliner around her eyes. Over the thousands of years, however, these have disintegrated. The sculpture would have embodied erotic allure, one of the most beautiful sculptures seen in its time. It is often called the 'Sumerian Mona Lisa'.

Inanna held power over sexuality, and was a kind of 'Lady Virago'. The modern little blue tablet Viagra derives its name from the word 'virago', and this gives you an idea of its effects. Inanna embodied – in other words – vigour, libido, as well as erotic allure and prowess. Her religion incorporated people of non-normative sexuality and identity, as well as the heterosexual union of Inanna and the shepherd

Dumuzi as king.

Inanna was not some throwback to an ‘uncivilised’ era. The reverse is in fact true – Inanna made civilisation possible. What drove production and reproduction in the ancient city was vigour, domination and erotic allure. Men brought offerings of food and tributes to the temple district. There were healthy grain surpluses and livestock were robust and productive. Precious stones and resources were brought to the city from far away, crafts were nurtured beside the Goddess, and wonderful festivals and celebrations attracted people and invigorated its inhabitants. In the Eanna district of the Goddess, civilisation was nurtured with erotic vigour.

A vessel known as the *Warka Vase* depicts scenes of offerings made to her temple. It resides in the Baghdad Museum, but is in pieces, having been stolen during the chaos of the Iraq War in 2003, and placed at number one on the ‘Most Wanted Antiquities List’.² It was later returned in an amnesty but broken into 14 pieces. (The *Lady of Warka* was also stolen, and was found buried in a farmer’s backyard under a foot of soil. Thankfully it was not damaged, only requiring a clean after the ordeal.)

A photo of the *Uruk Vase* before the theft shows bounty production, offerings and tribute brought by naked men to the Goddess (see **Figure 2**). (Modern-day Dominatrices reading this book are no doubt nodding their heads in approval at the thought of naked men made to labour and bring tribute to the Goddess. The contemporary language of money and gifts brought to Dominatrices is actually called ‘tribute to the Goddess’.) On the bottom registers are plants and sheep. On the uppermost register is the presentation of offerings to the Goddess Inanna and the figure of a woman who is probably the high *En*-Priestess. The two pillar-shaped forms that curl off at the top, behind the priestess, are symbols that stood for the Goddess Inanna.



Figure 2 *Warka (Uruk) vase*, c. 3200–3000 BCE. Carved alabaster with friezes, 1 m (height). Iraq Museum. [Naked men bringing offerings to the Goddess Inanna.]

What was this symbol? This vertical pillar-like shape with coiling end? It represented the reed doorpost of the storehouse and sheepfold. (In some rural areas doorposts are still made out of woven

reed.) This symbol linked the grain house with the vaginal tract, to be filled, with seed, with milk, with plenty. There was a correlation between filling up the storehouse, and provision of m'Lady – to bring her what 'She' desires.

Goddess of the Storehouse: Milk and Grain and Plenty

The origins of Inanna are as Goddess of the sheepfold storehouse and as the radiant star of Venus. The *Uruk Trough* in the British Museum depicts this connection (see **Figure 3a**).

The entrance to the sheepfold storehouse is depicted in imagery on the vessel's side, with sheep entering and lambs emerging from either side. Projecting out from the top of the hut is Inanna's ancient symbol – the reedposts with spiral ends. The shape also recalls the rising ascension of the Venus star, and the form of the female vaginal tract. It is a shape that was familiar from birthing of sheep and knowledge of sexual intercourse. The sprouting seed, as it comes up from the soil, forms this shape. The female vulva and vaginal tract, the storage house and sheepfold, were interwoven concepts. On the side of the vessel, is the 'star-rosette' symbol of Inanna. It is an amalgamation of the Venus star and a flower in bloom. It is depicted on the side-view of the ritual trough-shaped vessel, along with sheep and the reedpost (see **Figure 3b**).



Figure 3a Detail from *The Uruk Trough* (Ritual vessel of the Goddess Inanna), c. 3300–3100 BCE. Limestone. British Museum.



Figure 3b Side view detail of *Uruk Trough* with star-rosette, sheep, and spiral reed post of Inanna.

Inanna's sexuality and her 'holy vulva' are celebrated in Mesopotamian literature. Translators often use the word 'genitals' to avoid saying (as Inanna does in the hymns) 'my holy vulva'. There is a body of Sumerian *balbales*, or erotic 'love poetry' as some refer to it,

in which Inanna plaintively asks 'Who will plough my holy vulva?'. Dumuzi, the shepherd god, answers to her call: 'I Dumuzi will plough your holy vulva'. 'Then plough ... man of my heart!', she replies. Archaeologists and textual scholars are in debate over whether there was a literal performance enacting the sexual union of the King and high *En*-Priestess at the climax of Inanna's festival, or whether it was an imagined mythological act.

Whether it was or wasn't a 'real' live sacred sex act performed is irrelevant to the underlying theme. Healthy vigorous sexuality, the woman's active part, desirous, wanting her vulva to be filled, was a celebration of libido, (re)production and bounty.

Inanna ritually prepared by bathing, wearing precious jewels and lining her eyes with black kohl, in erotic anticipation of the event. Dumuzi brings offerings, and often there is butter and cream and metaphors of milk-churning, the rhythm and energy of labour. Lettuce sprouting is a metaphor for growth, erection, vigour and life. The seed is planted. The tree is watered. The apple ripens. Seed and fluid, action and activity with vigour ensures growth and bounty.

What happens when Inanna descends to the underworld is that all sexual activity ceases on earth:

the bull would not mount the cow, the donkey would not impregnate the she-donkey,
the young man would not impregnate the girl in the street,
the young man has slept in his private room,
the young woman has slept by herself.³

Inanna's holy vulva, her erotic allure and glistening radiance, were worshipped.

The celebration of powerful female sexuality may well go back tens of thousands of years and longer, into prehistory. There are, for example, Upper Paleolithic finds of small figurines that represent voluptuous females, which date back to between 35,000 and 10,000 BCE. They are often referred to (perhaps misleadingly so) as 'Venus figurines'. The reason they're grouped together for discussion, despite coming from sites scattered around Siberia and Europe over a vast period of time, is because they share a number of attributes.

They're large-bodied, voluptuous, with pendulous breasts, wide hips and their vulva incised to denote the labia. Their head and face, however, receive very little attention or detail. It seems that what is important is their sexuality, their abundant female form. Some people have presumed they're pregnant, but this is not necessarily the case. The body type differs from our modern culture's emphasis on fit and slender bodies as the model of beauty. In the Upper Paleolithic Ice Age, this could well have been the body type of a woman who had attracted good provision of food, enjoyed sex, survived and flourished. The body of a matriarch – a figure of sexuality, fertility and abundance.⁴

As there was no written language recorded so far back in history, their meaning is unknown. There is, however, one image of a voluptuous 'Venus' figure carved into a limestone rock, which may provide some clue. She stands with an upraised horn – likely a fertility symbol (see **Figure 4**). The rock carving is known as the *Venus of Laussel*, named after the cave in France where she was found, dating back to 20,000 BCE. The horn she raises resembles a cornucopia – a 'horn of plenty' as it is later known. We don't know if it had the same kind of meaning so far back in prehistory. The horn is shaped like a crescent and has 13 notches inscribed within it. This could be an arbitrary number, but there are notably 13 lunar moon cycles and menstrual cycles each year. The crescent moon is used as a symbol, mainly by women, in ethnographic tribes around the world.⁵ Many Goddesses throughout history have also had the crescent moon or horn as one of their symbols.⁶



Figure 4 *Venus of Laussel*, c. 20,000 BCE. Limestone bas relief carving (rock shelter in Abri de Laussel, Dordogne, France). Musée d'Aquitaine.

Is our limestone-carved Lady an early Goddess? A Priestess performing a ritual? A woman who is illustrated in a symbolic way, connected perhaps to fertility or the moon?

Many thousands of years later in the Neolithic period, archaeologists found a Venus-type figure, actually recovered from within a grain storage bin (see **Figure 5**). She was found in Çatalhöyük in Turkey, a 'proto-city' dating between 7400–5700 BCE. Although some archaeologists dispute that the Çatalhöyük figurine is

a Goddess, there remains substantial evidence to suggest that she is. From a religious and iconographical analysis, the flanking lionesses, the throne-like seating and positioning of the female figure, *do* seem to support the case that she is a female deity. The site of the grain bin where the figurine was found suggests she was a Goddess relating to sexuality and fertility.



Figure 5 *Seated Female with Lionesses*, 6th millennium BCE. Found in grain bin at Çatalhöyük, Turkey.

Lion Power and Erotic Allure: The Body Language of a Dominatrix

The Dominatrix traits of the Goddess were depicted as ‘lion power’, as

well as birds of prey – with talons. The Anatolian Goddess Cybele, for example, was associated with the lion, the hawk (as a bird of prey) and the mountain. The well-known UK historian Bethany Hughes describes the Goddess Cybele portrayed in a large sculpture, which was once set into a niche within the mountain as ‘a kind of Dominatrix, guarding and ruling over a vast landscape’.⁷ These same elements that would characterise the Goddess Cybele seemingly carried through to Inanna. She is represented by the fierce lion, the bird(s) of prey, the mountains and entrance to the ‘Netherworld’.

One of the treasures of the British Museum is the *Queen of the Night*, a baked clay relief, depicting a woman who is believed to be Inanna (see **Figure 6**). The Lady wears the horned headdress of divinity and holds a rod and reel in each hand, denoting her Goddess status. She rides on a pair of lions. Her feet are those of a bird of prey, and she is framed by a pair of owls who hunt nocturnally. The Goddess displays a ‘fierce sexuality’, simultaneously powerful and alluring. Her breasts are prominent in the relief plaque, and her nipples and pubic triangle would have been highlighted by colour contrast in the plaque’s pigmentation (which has been lost through time’s passage.) The Goddess’s jewellery would have been coloured to evoke gold, lapis lazuli and carnelian.⁸



Figure 6 *Queen of the Night* (attributed as Ishtar-Inanna), c. 1800–1750 BCE. Clay plaque, 49.5 cm × 37 cm. British Museum.

Her adornment was sacred to her powers of erotic allure. The name for Inanna's kohl eye make-up mascara (translated) was 'Let a man come, let a man come!'. Her breast jewellery, was called 'Come man, come!'.⁹ To beautify and adorn oneself was to take up sacred erotic power.

To get a sense of what Goddess and Priestess jewellery looked like, we can see similar jewellery in the famous tombs of the city of Ur (another important city, which was a short distance from Uruk) (see

Figure 7). Much jewellery and make-up was excavated from the tomb of *Nin Puabi* (Lady Puabi), and in nearby tombs. Many of these finds also have the familiar star-rosette symbol.



Figure 7 Reconstruction of *Jewelry* from (Priestess[?]), ‘Royal’ Tombs of Ur, c. 2600 BCE. British Museum.

Make-up was stored in bivalve shells (thought to be symbols of the female genitalia and the lips of the labia, which swell and open with arousal). When the Goddess Aphrodite arrived on the shores of Cyprus on a scallop shell (according to mythology), it may have been literally with shells of cosmetics that the Eastern Goddess cult arrived

onto the island, transported with Phoenicians and other seafarers.¹⁰

Even today, make-up is referred to as ‘war paint’, suggestive of the Dominatrix-styled use of cosmetic for erotic allure and power.

The Goddess’s pose in the *Queen of the Night* plaque is front-on, directly engaging with the viewer – ‘Dominatrix-style’. In fact this is no more evident than in an Akkadian cylinder seal of the Goddess as Ishtar (see **Figure 8**). Mesopotamian cylinder seals were traditionally made from precious hard stone inscribed with images, and used to impress the image by being rolled along the surface of damp clay or heated wax. They were also held and worn as valuable objects. In this cylinder seal of Ishtar from the Penn Museum the Goddess is dressed in a holy garment, armed with weapons as Warriress. A split in her dress exposes her leg, and her foot is raised to rest on a lion. It gets better still ... she holds the lion on a leash!



Figure 8 The [*Dominatrix Goddess*] Inanna-Ishtar [holding a lion on a leash], c. 2334–2165 BCE. Cylinder seal. Oriental Institute of Chicago.

Her body language and positioning is much aligned to the modern-day Dominatrix – a quick flick through any contemporary Dominatrix magazine or website will show numerous photographs of Dominatrices in exactly this pose.

The powerful Dominatrix pose is the antithesis of the ‘reclining Venus’ paintings of the Western tradition. She is not laid out passively for male sexual access. She is full-facing, standing, confrontational and gazing directly out with dominant body language, and ‘owning’

her sexuality.

This image of powerful sexuality finds its literary counterpart in ‘Dominatrix literature’. Written as hymns to the Goddess Inanna, the texts are linked to a woman named Enheduanna. They describe the Goddess’s powers of domination, a mysterious implement called a *keppû* – used in her holy ‘games’, and Dominatrix rituals involving gender transformation and pain.

Enheduanna and the Dominatrix Literature

Enheduanna lived around 2285–2250 BCE. She is one of the earliest women we know about on the historical record, and the daughter of King Sargon. She held the powerful role of high *En*-Priestess to the Moon God Nanna and female consort Ningal (meaning ‘great Lady/Queen’). Enheduanna was also very much devoted to the Goddess Inanna, and speaks in the first person within a hymn to the Goddess Inanna. Further evidencing her role as author or editor, the ‘Temple Hymns’ that are associated with her name end with the line: ‘The compiler of the tablets was Enheduanna. My king, something has been created that no one has created before.’¹¹

Enheduanna’s powerful role is not doubted by anyone in archaeology. She held one of the highest positions available in religion, and is connected to a body of religious texts, copied out repeatedly, long after her death. The main point substantially under debate is whether she *wrote* the hymns herself as their author, or *edited* existing hymns by re-crafting them, before bringing them together as a body of work. Her style is so distinctive, that experts in Sumerian language can recognise her expression.

There is an image of Enheduanna, in her role as high Priestess, on a stone disc that archaeologists uncovered in the city of Ur (see **Figure 9**). It was found in the temple of the Goddess Ningal. The reason we know the disc is of Enheduanna is because it’s conveniently inscribed. (On the reverse side, Enheduanna is recorded as the dedicator of the object.)



Figure 9 *Disc of the High En-Priestess Enheduanna from Ur, c. 2350–2300 BCE. Calcite limestone disc, 25 cm (diameter). Penn Museum.*

Enheduanna is portrayed as the central figure in the scene – wearing a robe and crown of Ladyship/Priestess-ship. She oversees the pouring of libation liquid (most likely) into the ritual alter/basin. The priest figure behind her is holding an object that is assumed to be a ritual fly whisk.¹²

The hymns were of course not recorded with pen on paper, as we think of today. They were recorded on clay plaques, using a wedge-shaped stylus to push down on the damp clay, leaving behind wedge-shaped marks. This script is called ‘cuneiform’.

To convey an idea of what these writings in cuneiform on clay once looked like, there is a completely intact *Hymn to the Goddess Inanna* – which had the rare good fortune of being preserved in the Library of Ashurbanipal in the fire that destroyed Nineveh (see **Figure 10**).

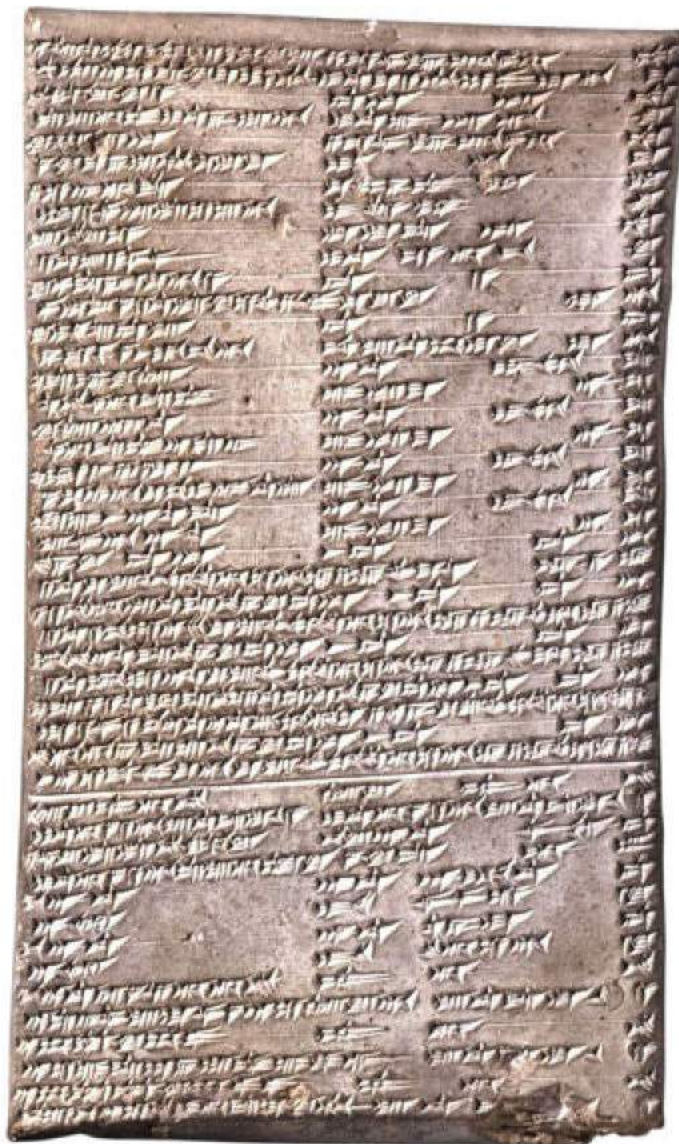


Figure 10 Clay cuneiform tablet of Hymn to Ishtar. Neo-Assyrian from Library of Ashurbanipal, 16 cm × 9.4 cm. British Museum.

This tablet is more recent than those under discussion (it's *only* 2,600+ years old), but it's a good example of the original appearance of cuneiform clay tablets. Most ancient tablets are broken and have shattered into pieces over time; the pieces have often ended up in different museums – one piece in one museum and the other in

another museum, only later being put back together with some effort.

Luckily there are often several versions of important hymns and stories. They were copied out many times over centuries (and sometimes even millennia). For example, copies of texts believed to have been authored by Enheduanna have been found dating centuries after her death in ancient cities of such as Ur and Nippur.

The ancient Goddess 'Dominatrix' texts include:

- *Inanna and Enki* (the story of Inanna manipulating the God of Wisdom into giving her all the 'mes' powers, which she seizes and takes to Uruk)
- *Inanna and Ebih* (the story of the Goddess Inanna fiercely dominating Ebih, with a dance of domination)
- *Hymn to Inanna* (the 'Lady of the Largest Heart', demonstrating her Dominatrix powers and Dominatrix rituals involving cross-dressing, punishment, pain and ecstasy).

The first of these, *Inanna and Enki*, is perhaps least relevant to the story, but will be discussed briefly, as it offers some amusement and demonstration of the Dominatrix Goddess seeking all the powers for herself.

In ancient Mesopotamia, the 'mes' (pronounced mays) were the 'civilisation powers', representing special knowledge and crafts associated with the city.

The Goddess Inanna had been assigned power over sexuality in the allocation of powers amongst the gods, but naturally she wanted *all* the powers (like any good Dominatrix). So how does the Dominatrix Goddess go about obtaining all the 'mes' powers? Well, first, Inanna praises her sacred vulva. The ancient text literally reads, 'her vulva was remarkable ... she praised herself, full of delight at her vulva.'¹³

Next, she goes to see Daddy, the God Enki, and drinks beer with him. She coaxes him to give her all the 'mes' powers, generously, in turn, as they toast their drinking vessels.¹⁴ From what can be made out in translation, these important 'mes', the foundation powers of civilisation, were:

The power of heroism, power of war plundering, power of making ritual lamentations, power of managing celebrations, power of agriculture and the sheepfold, power of awe, power of reverence, power of respect, the ritual objects of power – the scepter, staff and crook, specialist priestesses and priests, ability to ascend (into the heavens) and descend, craft of ritual hairstyling, art of sex, art of kissing of the phallus, art of prostitution, power of the holy tavern, power of making fire, craft of music, craft of eldership, the craft of scribeship (writing), the craft of copper work, craft of leather work, craft of building and basket weaving from reeds, power and knowledge of giving wise counsel, power of judgment, and power of decision-making.¹⁵

She takes off with all the ‘mes’ powers in her boat of heaven, and once her father comes to his senses and realises he’s given her all the powers, he sends his minister after his daughter to make her return them. Inanna, however, holds her position staunchly. She tells the minister that her father gave her the ‘mes’, holds him to his word, and she continues onto her city of Uruk.¹⁶

By these means, Inanna and her city of Uruk came to hold all the powers (in mythology). There was a historical basis of truth to the myth. These ‘mes’ powers were the strengths and attributes that made Uruk the powerful city it was.

Male historians tend to emphasise ‘grain surplus’, empire and metal technology in their story of civilisation, and often neglect to see the importance of rituals, celebrations, hairdressing, ‘holy’ taverns, the power of sex, and ... apparently, the art of the blow job. Sex was made important to the ancient city, with a Dominatrix Goddess symbolically holding its power.

The Warrior Goddess and her Dance of Domination (with a Whip?)

Inanna’s domination was aimed over various men, gods and foreign states. One of the ancient sacred texts on Inanna’s powers of domination over the mountains of Ebih, in which she is depicted as a Warriess Dominatrix and likened to a roaring lion, reads:

Goddess of the fearsome divine powers, clad in terror, riding on the great

divine powers. In heaven and earth you roar like a lion ... Like a huge wild bull you triumph over lands which are hostile. **Like a fearsome lion you pacify the insubordinate and unsubmitive with your gall.**¹⁷

Inanna as a 'Dominatrix Goddess' forces men and mountains to bow down to her in submission:

Since they did not act appropriately of their own initiative, since they did not put their noses to the ground for me, since they did not rub their lips in the dust for me, I shall fill my hand with the soaring mountain range and let it learn fear of me ... I shall storm it and start the 'game' of holy Inanna.¹⁸

Inanna has a very special 'game' or 'dance', which was held as being sacred and holy. It involved a mysterious implement called a *keppû*. It's mentioned in a number of texts, and for a long time this *keppû* has baffled scholars.

It was mistakenly thought to be a skipping rope, based on a glyptic scene that shows Inanna holding up what was thought to be a skipping rope, arced over her head. This, however, turned out to be completely wrong. The supposed skipping rope was actually a depiction of Inanna as a young woman raising up her skirt. The purported skipping rope was actually the hemline of her dress raised.¹⁹ (Ah yes, Inanna was certainly a 'cock tease'.)

So it was back to the drawing board for archaeologists; and the mystery thickened. One of the leading scholars in translating ancient texts, Pirjo Lapinkivi, noticed that the *keppû* was used with the verb *šutakpû* – meaning 'to make bend, to make whirl around'. It was used in the Goddess's playground, or playspace.²⁰ Stephane Dalley proposed that it may be a 'whip(ing) top'.²¹ The object, however, seemed to have also been brandished as a weapon.²²

Any Dominatrix reading this book, is going to be more or less squealing 'it's a whip!', or similar domination implement. A modern Dominatrix indeed wields whips, floggers, cat o' nine tails, canes, tawses, paddles, all referred to as her 'toys'. Her domination activities are described as 'her play', and her dungeon chamber is referred to as her 'playspace'.

Is the Goddess Inanna's mysterious *keppû* implement a whip (or

similar)?

Looking at the ancient images so far excavated, Inanna is seen holding:

- battle weapons (with bows and arrows on her back, such as in the *Ishtar cylinder seal*)
- power objects (such as the sacred rod and reel, as in *Queen of the Night*)
- date branches or reeds which were supposed to symbolise fertility (such as in the *Adda Seal* in the British Museum).

No image exists is known to show her distinctively with a whip. She does hold the date branch in a whip-like fashion, as many have pointed out, opening up the possibility that it could have been used in this manner.

There is, however, an interesting clay plaque fragment in the Penn Museum, depicting a figure of a lion, which is typically Ishtar's creature (see **Figure 11**). It is the bottom part of a plaque only, and according to the Penn catalogue was meant to 'fit' another top-part fragment of a male deity with a whip. The two, however, didn't seem a correct match, and further enquiries showed indeed they weren't a fit, and the 'match' was an error.²³



Figure 11 *Figure on a lion (Ishtar-Inanna?) in Ishtar lion plaque, c. 2000–1595 BCE. Clay plaque fragment, 7 cm. Penn Museum.*

The plaque may well then be the Goddess Inanna-Ishtar on her lion, and to ‘her’ left-hand side is an arrangement of a star-cross form, connecting lines and a circle. The mysterious *keppû*? A multi-stranded whip, like a cat o’ nines tails being spun? Or is it a pictograph with the symbol of the star and other lines?

Adding a further possible piece to the jigsaw puzzle is a much later Neo-Assyrian wall relief depicting a figure holding what is thought to be a whip. Costumed in a lion skin, the figure is a participant in a procession to the Goddess Ishtar (see **Figure 12**).²⁴



Figure 12 *Celebratory Procession* (honouring Ishtar, with figure with whip), 730–727 BCE. Neo-Assyrian gypsum wall relief from reign Tiglath Pileser III. British Museum.

Why would a whip be held in association with the Goddess? The whip/flogger/flail implement was used as a symbol of ritual and sexual domination in ancient religion, connected to fertility and warrior(ess) power. In ancient Egypt, for example, the God Min holds a flail implement with a large erect penis.²⁵ The flail was used as a dominance implement, derived from the agricultural flail or animal whip, exhibiting power of libido and fertility, and dominance over animals and agriculture.

Colossal sculptures of the God Min were found at the Temple of Coptus (see **Figure 13**). Some of these form the centrepiece of Oxford's Ashmolean Museum collection. They once had enormous erect penises, which the God Min gripped at the base, made of marble that slotted into a socket. The God's other hand held an implement – believed to be a flail – at his side. The powerful sexual symbolism of the Min sculptures is hidden from the public. The giant penises lay somewhere in the basement storage of the Ashmolean, leaving the hand of each God Min sculpture grasping an empty socket hole.



Figure 13 *Sculpture of God Min from Coptus (missing phallus).*

The ‘unofficial’ colloquial name of the Min sculptures at the Ashmolean is ‘the giant cockless wankers’. Miniatures of the sculptures are sold at the Ashmolean Museum’s gift store (often purchased as gifts for an ‘in joke’ between Oxford University students). The small ‘cockless wankers’ have in this way found their way into homes, offices and bookshelves of Oxford alumni around the world. (No disparagement of Oxford University or its graduates intended.)

It’s likely that the mystery of the Goddess Inanna’s dance of domination and her *keppû* implement will be solved in due course. The many fragments of artifacts that are in storage facilities of

museums and private collections around the world may reveal the solution, and there is still much to be revealed under the sands of Mesopotamia in future archaeological digs.

In the meantime, though, no doubt Dominatrices will be placing their bets.

Dominatrix Rituals of Gender Transformation, Ecstasy and Pain

The sacred rituals of Inanna resemble practices of modern-day Dominatrices, which include gender transformation ceremonies, punishment, pain, ecstasy, lamentations and bringing about altered states of consciousness.

The *Hymn to Inanna* (or ‘Lady of the Largest Heart’) reads:

To turn a man into a woman and a woman into a man are yours, Inanna
[your powers].²⁶

The Goddess reportedly had the power to transform men into women, and women into men. These practices were not just mythological, but actually practiced.

The transformation of gender is very interesting, as modern-day Dominatrices also engage in practices of ‘forced feminisation’, ‘sissy-training’ and other play around ‘gendering’. These often take place in a feminine ‘boudoir’ space – equipped with wigs, make-up, frilly and ‘slutty’ female clothing, jewellery, hosiery, high heels and boots. The Dominatrix offers a ‘safe place’ with an open mind and heart that welcomes all gender identities. People with transgender identities (who identify with or wish to be the opposite gender), as well as those with transvestite desires (who desire to wear the attire of the opposite gender), often seek out the Dominatrix for her skills in this area. The Dominatrix also undertakes ‘forced feminisation’ and cross-dressing, or mixing of male and female elements – androgyny, to emphasise that her realm is outside of social restrictions and normative gender roles and pressures.

Betty De Shong Meador describes Inanna’s gender transformation

rituals as honouring the ceremonial aspect of persons of ambiguous gender identification. She notes that the young woman in the gender-crossing ritual is described using the Sumerian word ‘*la-la*’, meaning ‘the vigour of a young man in his prime’.²⁷ Inanna’s temple personnel included people who were androgynous and sexually ambivalent, eunuchs, hermaphrodites, transvestites²⁸ and sexual submissives, who all had a place within the Goddess’s heart. Some were seemingly given roles as singers, entertainers and drummers in service at Goddess festivities.

The passage of the *Hymn to Inanna*, which documents the Dominatrix rituals is partially broken. From what we can make out, the Goddess opens ‘the door of wisdom and makes known its interior’. It reads:

Those who do not respect her suspended net do not escape ... when she suspends the meshes of her net. The man she has called by name she does not hold in esteem. Having approached the woman, she breaks the weapon and gives her a spear. The male *g̃išgisag̃keš*, the *nisub* and the female *g̃išgi* ritual officiants, after having ... **punishment, moaning** ... The **ecstatic**, the **transformed** *pilipili*, the *kurg̃ara* and the *sag̃ursag̃* ... Lament and song ... They exhaust themselves with weeping and grief, they ... laments.²⁹

Is the ‘suspended net’ a bondage suspension net (as used by modern-day Dominatrices), or is the line merely metaphorical? Translators are not sure. Elsewhere the hymn is certainly full of the visual imagery of domination. The Goddess Inanna is described as ‘The mistress, an eagle that lets no one escape’, and as ‘a huge shackle clamping down on the gods’.³⁰

She dominates the gods within the hymn, who are forced to bow down and abase themselves before Inanna, kissing the earth and prostrating before the Goddess.³¹

The ritual described is imbued with pain and ecstasy, bringing about initiation and journeys of altered states of consciousness; punishment, moaning, ecstasy, lament and song, participants exhausting themselves in weeping and grief.³² These are states that modern Dominatrices use to bring about cathartic release, along with

a wash of endorphins, emotions and 'sub-space' experienced as going on a journey or as flying.

The *En*-Priestess Enheduanna, speaks dramatically in the first person within the hymn, proclaiming devotion: 'My lady ... mercy ... compassion ... I am yours!'

She makes a plea for mercy from the Goddess, noting, 'my body has experienced your great punishment'.³³

Enheduanna's 'punishment' has long been assumed to relate to oppression or expulsion from the temple, but does Enheduanna actually refer to physical punishment and pain? Unfortunately a significant chunk of the text is missing from breaks within the clay fragment. (The word 'mercy' is the most common plea used by slaves within Dominatrices' sessions, and is commonly used as the negotiated 'safe word'.)

Blood sacrifice is a rite of religious devotion and transcendence of the body that is performed cross-culturally around the world. In the Christian tradition, flagellation and 'mortification of the body' were practiced in monasteries by monks and saints.

Modern-day Dominatrices utilise floggers, whips, needle and bloodplay to push their subject into acceptance of pain in devotion and submission. People undertaking these practices experience an 'endorphin high', in which they feel as though they're flying or floating, leaving their body, and going on a journey. They also often report a sense of cathartic release, ecstasy and processing of wisdom, revelation and insights, which can occur over several days after the experience.

In Mesopotamia, ritual dress pins may have been used for piercing the flesh. There were numerous dress pins made in silver and gold found in the 'Tombs of Ur', and strangely, some two millennia later, similar dress pins were found at the site of the Goddess Artemis Orthia in Sparta. It is interesting that this same site held ceremonies involving the whipping of young men in honour of a Goddess ...

The 'Whipstress' and the Mysteries

A ritual called the *diamastigosis* (flagellation) was performed on young men (*ephebes*), in honour of the Goddess Artemis Orthia of Sparta. The ceremony was an initiation, described here by the historian Pausanias:

By them stands the priestess, holding the wooden image. Now it is small and light, but if ever the scourgers spare the lash because of a lad's beauty or high rank, then at once the priestess finds the image grow so heavy that she can hardly carry it. She lays the blame on the scourgers, and says that it is their fault that she is being weighed down. So the image ever since the sacrifices in the Tauric land keeps its fondness for human blood.³⁴

The Goddess's name 'Orthia' meant standing upright, straight or erect. This may have been the statue of the Goddess, which was upright erect, or it may have also had a connotation to the sexual arousal she invoked. Ithyphallic sculptures with erect penises were excavated at the site, alongside the dress pins, masks and female figurines.³⁵

Amongst the finds were small lead votives depicting a Warriorress Goddess with arrows visible on her back and a headdress (see **Figure 14**). Another figure depicts a woman with wings holding an implement that was probably a whip, based on the historical accounts of the flagellation ceremony (see **Figure 15**).





Figures 14 and 15 *Priestess/Goddess figurines of Artemis Orthia at Sparta*, late 6th–5th century BCE. Votive lead figurines. 3.5cm high. Fitzwilliam Museum of Cambridge.

Over in Pompeii is a ‘Whipstress’ figure with wings, which can be found in the Villa of Mysteries. The fresco wall panels around the room of the private villa seem to represent the initiation of a young woman into the ‘Mysteries’. During the rituals she receives pain at the hand of a Whipstress, who wears a magnificent set of wings and is poised to bring down a powerful stroke (see **Figure 16**).



Figure 16 *Winged priestess wielding a whip*, pre-79 AD. Wall fresco.
Villa of Mysteries, Pompeii, Italy.

These images from the Greek and Roman world show that the ‘Whipstress’ role was not one of meaningless violence, but held within sacred initiation ceremonies. The Priestess was initiator, driving a ceremonial symbolic death and rebirth.

The archaic Goddess Aphrodite may, too, once have been armed. A marble sculpture of her wielding some now-lost weapon in her upraised arm was recovered from the Villa of Theseus. Pausanias also makes reference to wooden ‘armed Aphrodite’ (*hoplismenē*) in a number of locations in Cythera, Acrocorinth and Sparta.³⁶ It is perhaps telling that Aphrodite was described as an ‘awful and lovely Goddess’ in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, and another name for her was

‘Philommedes’, which can be interpreted as sexy ‘smile-loving’ or ‘testicle-loving’.³⁷ Her origins hint at the word-play and association with semen – she was born fully formed from the ‘*aphros*’ of sea foam of the castrated genitals of Uranus.

The female poet Sappho wrote in devotion of the Goddess Aphrodite from the island of Lesbos, talking about Aphrodite’s ‘hard pains’:

Deathless Aphrodite of the spangled mind (inlaid throne),
child of Zeus, who twists lures, I beg you
do not break with hard pains,
O lady, my heart.³⁸

The Overthrow of the Priestess and Goddess Figures

It would be impossible to discuss the subject of the Dominatrix Goddess and not address the influence of the patriarchal religions of Christianity and Islam, in which female sexuality was made passive, controlled and in service of the husband. Whereas for thousands of years various Goddesses had held power over sexuality, fertility and allure, which was celebrated in the ancient world, these Goddesses were soon to be killed off by male-dominated monotheism. With them, the powerful Priestesses were also overthrown.

In the Bible, the Priestess Jezebel is symbolically cast out of the window, a ‘painted woman’ (2 Kings 9-30). Archeologists have recovered sculpted female heads from a drain in Jordan, and the ‘woman in the window’ appears as a motif in Nimrud ivories and in a *maquette* of a temple building in Cyprus. It appears that the Goddess religion associated with Astarte and other sexual Goddesses of the Eastern Mediterranean once had female heads mounted architecturally within the window frames of the temple. These sculpted female heads would have been decorated with precious inlay of lapis lazuli and other stones, beautified and made sacred.

These Goddesses of sexuality and their Priestesses, played an important role in the celebration of allure, vitality, fertility and union, which were an important part of ensuring cities and civilisations were

vital, productive, blossoming, producing and reproducing. The Goddesses and Priestesses were, however, overthrown by the establishment of religiously institutionalised patriarchal male control over private property and male bloodlines. By controlling female sexuality, whereby women were property passed from father to husband, legitimate offspring would be ensured along with guarantee of paternity. Chastity before marriage was enforced. Adultery and sexual acts outside marriage were punished.

Women came to be excluded from high positions within clergy. 'Priestesses' have been unheard of in the Western world and the Middle East for centuries, with the Anglican Church being one of the few that allows women as priests – and not without controversy. Meanwhile religious advice and rulings issue forth from male priests and clerics on topics from contraception and abortion to limitations around women's clothing, and obedience and submission to husbands in marriage.

The Dominatrix poses threat to the social order – to male dominance – at the same time, she arouses. When I came to write this book, I was interested in the taboo effect of the word. Indeed it was kind of a taboo of a taboo (of a taboo), layered up and upon itself.

On the one hand it is the woman cast as harlot, as sexual, as prostitutional and as upfront. (In illustrations, too, she is facing, upfront and confrontational.) On the other, she is not appeasing and submissive to male authority. She is demanding and seeks to be in control herself. Using her powers of beauty, allure and wisdom, she is most terrifying to men because they fear losing control and being brought down by their desire for a woman.

The powerful history of the Dominatrix Goddess and Priestesses reveals how important she was in the emergence of cities associated with early civilisation and literature. The high Priestesses embraced sexuality's mystical wisdom and power, held knowledge of altered states of consciousness, of gender play and submission; and variant forms of sexual identity were embraced within their practices. People of 'third gender', who were otherwise shunned by society, were provided with a role and identity. Her festivals were colourful and

celebratory, drawing people to the city from afar, bringing with them their craft knowledge and material resources set up in proximity to the temple. The practices of the Dominatrix Goddess invigorated the people from deep within their loins. She encouraged union and fertility, production and abundance, Warriorress powers, to the benefit of the city and for a flourishing civilisation.

Endnotes

- 1 Hafford, B. 'Ur Digitization Project: Item of the Month June 2012' (Disc of Enheduanna) Penn Museum (2012). Available online at (<http://www.penn.museum/blog/museum/ur-digitization-project-item-of-the-month-june-2012/>); see also: De Shong Meador, B. *Inanna: Lady of Largest Heart, Poems of the Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna* (University of Texas Press, 2010); and De Shong Meador, B. *Princess, Priestess, Poet: The Temple Hymns of Enheduanna* (University of Texas Press, 2010).
- 2 See: Iraq Museum Database (<http://oi.uchicago.edu/OI/IRAQ/dbfiles/Iraqdatabasehome.htm>) and Emergency Red List of Iraqi Antiquities at Risk (<http://icom.museum/resources/red-lists-database/red-list/iraq/>).
- 3 Lapinkivi, Pirjo, 'The Descent of Inanna to the Underworld', *The Neo-Assyrian Myth of Istar's Descent and Resurrection* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2010), p. 31; Black, J., Cunningham, G., Robson, E. and Zolyomio, G. "Inanna's Descent Into the Underworld", *The Literature of Ancient Sumer* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).
- 4 The term 'matriarch' should not be read as upholding the belief of ancient matriarchy. It is still very unclear as to the structure of societies within the Upper Paleolithic period, and whether they were matrilineal or not.
- 5 To give but one example, the Ede tribe of Vietnam use a crescent moon, breasts and star as symbols in their matrilineal culture. The symbols of the crescent moon and breasts are, for example, carved into a ladder to the longhouse of a powerful matrilineal family at

an outdoor exhibition at the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi. The Ede culture is matrilineal, with children taking the name of the mother's family. The woman initiates marriage by deciding who she wants to marry, and her husband goes on to live with the woman's family.

- 6 The Goddess Astarte is represented with the crescent or 'double horn'. Many other Goddesses who have the crescent symbol are moon Goddesses – Artemis, Luna, Diana, etc. The Mesopotamian Goddess Inanna-Ishtar is associated with the crescent moon shape – the 'boat of heaven' – linked to her sex. Indian Goddesses Durga and Kali have the crescent as one of their symbols.
- 7 Hughes, Bethany, *When God Was A Girl* (London: BBC, 2012), DVD.
- 8 The British Museum has once undertaken a digital reconstruction of the plaque with painting, showing a dark background, and the Goddess's skin painted and jewellery picked out. Interestingly, though, even this reconstruction sanitises her erotic power and presence, in which her nipples and pubic triangle were once strongly emphasised in paint contrast. Her vulva was sacred, and repeatedly referenced in the ancient literature. It would have been painted in a dark colour for emphasis, as can still be discerned in the Musée du Louvre's *Ishtar Vase*.
- 9 'Inanna's Descent Into the Underworld', Black, J., Cunningham, G., Robson, E. and Zolyomi, G. (2010).
- 10 The arrival of Aphrodite was not purely an import of a new religion, but a union between pre-existing Goddess worship on the island, meeting with Eastern belief systems, ideas, artifacts and customs. Like Inanna-Ishtar, and the Phoenician Goddess Astarte, Aphrodite would also be associated with the star of Venus, sexuality, jewellery and the art of adornment and allure.
- 11 The 'Temple Hymns of Enheduanna' are viewable in translation on the Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.80.1#>): 'The compiler of the tablets was Enheduanna. My king, something has

been created that no one has created before.’ (Lines 543–44).

- 12 The attribution of the object as a ‘fly whisk’ may need to be reviewed. Fly whisks are ceremonially used across cultures around the world, and are identifiable in the British Museum’s *The ‘Garden Party’ relief from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal* scene (ref. no. ME 124920). Many items have been identified from Victorian times onwards as being ‘fly whisks’, which may have been other objects. For example, whips are recorded in use for Ishtar rituals (see Figure 12: gypsum wall panel relief from the reign of Tiglath-pileser III, which shows a lion-cloaked figure with an implement – seemingly a whip – in a celebration procession) (British Museum, ref. no. 136773).
- 13 The Oxford translation uses the term ‘genitals’ rather than ‘vulva’. See ‘Inana and Enki’ online at Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.3.1#>).
- 14 ‘Inanna and the God of Wisdom’, *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer* (New York: Harper and Row, 1983), pp. 16–19. See also: ‘Inana and Enki’, ETCSL.
- 15 Author’s own adaption working from translations of Wolkstein, D. and Noah Kramer, S. ‘Inanna and the God of Wisdom’, and ‘Inana and Enki’, ETCSL.
- 16 Ibid.
- 17 Emphasis my own. ‘Inana and Ebih’, ETCSL, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.1.3.2#>). Also available in translation in De Shong Meador, B. *Inanna: Lady of Largest Heart, Poems of the Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2000), pp. 89–102.
- 18 ‘Inana and Ebih’, ETCSL, lines 33–40.
- 19 Dalley, S. (2000) *Myths from Mesopotamia: Creation, the Flood, Gilgamesh and Others* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 130 n. 80; Lapinkivi, P. *The Neo-Assyrian Myth of Ištar’s Descent*

and Resurrection *The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project*, pp. 49–54. The old translation was that Inanna's Game was competing with skipping ropes, but as argued by Dalley (and Lapinkivi) this was based on a misinterpretation of a glyptic scene, and it is now thought that the *keppû*, which has been translated as skipping rope, is in fact a whipping top or whip.

- 20 Lapinkivi, P. *The Neo-Assyrian Myth of Ištar's Descent and Resurrection*, p. 47–48.
- 21 Dalley quoted in footnotes of Lapinkivi, op. cit.
- 22 In 'The Exploits of Ninutra', the character named Lugale-e says: 'Do not lift your arm to the smiting of weapons, to the festival of the young men, to Inanna's dance (*ešemen inanna-ke*).' See lines 135–37, cited in Lapinkivi, P. *The Neo-Assyrian Myth of Ištar's Descent and Resurrection*, p. 50.
- 23 The relevant objects are Penn Museum's Ishtar lion object (31-43-425, field number: U.16910a) (<http://www.penn.museum/collections/object/196231>); and deity with whip object (31-43-455, field number: U.16487) (<http://www.penn.museum/collections/object/48366>).
- 24 Wall panel relief, 730–727 BC, reign of Tiglath-Pileser III, from the Central Palace at Nimrud, British Museum (ref. no. 136773). See Barnett, R. D. and Falkner, M. 'The Sculptures of Tiglath-pileser III' (London, 1962), pp. 9–10; and British Museum website: (http://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_objectId=369051&partId=1&searchText=136773&page=1).
- 25 Kemp, B. J. *Ancient Egypt: Anatomy of a Civilization* (London: Routledge, 2006). (See, in particular, figure 47, p. 138. Formalised images of the God Min as fertility god, adding to the ideal anthropomorphic image of god, the elements of the erect penis and brandished flail derived from the Coptus Colossai.)
- 26 'Lady of the Largest Heart', or 'A Hymn to Inana (C)', available at Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi->

[bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.07.3#](http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.07.3#)). ('A Hymn to Inana [Inana C]', see lines 115–31.)

27 De Shong Meador, B. *Inanna: Lady of Largest Heart, Poems of the Sumerian High Priestess Enheduanna* (Texas: University of Texas Press, 2000), p. 162; and see section more generally on 'Androgyne', pp. 162–67 (and references).

28 Ibid.

29 'Lady of the Largest Heart', or 'A Hymn to Inana (C)', ETCSL, Faculty of Oriental Studies, University of Oxford (<http://etcsl.orinst.ox.ac.uk/cgi-bin/etcsl.cgi?text=t.4.07.3#>). ('A Hymn to Inana [Inana C]', see lines 80–90.)

30 'Lady of the Largest Heart' or 'A Hymn to Inana (C)', see end section: lines 1–10, 29–38.

31 Ibid., see lines 99–114.

32 Ibid., see lines 80–90.

33 Ibid., see lines 243–53.

34 Pausanias III, 16: 10-11 (<http://www.theoi.com/Text/Pausanias3B.html>).

35 The historian Pausanias discusses a biannual festival involving ritual whippings in aid of women's fertility, practiced on Alea (where there were sanctuaries to the Ephesian Artemis). 'In honor of Dionysus they celebrate every other year a festival called Sciereia, and at this festival, in obedience to a response from Delphi, women are flogged, just as the Spartan lads are flogged at the image of the Orthian goddess.' (Pausanias VIII, 23:1, <http://www.theoi.com/Text/Pausanias8B.html>)

36 He refers to them as being at the sanctuary of Aphrodite Urania in Cythera, a temple of Aphrodite on Acrocorinthus's summit, and at an ancient temple to Aphrodite with an upper storey in Sparta. See Pausanias III, 23:1; II, 5:1; III, 15:10.

37 Hesiod, *Theogony*, 195-200 in particular, and see Cyrino, M. S. *Aphrodite* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 39–40.

38 Carson, A. *If Not, Winter: Fragments of Sappho* (Virago Press, 2002), p. 3, 357.

Chapter II

The Female Flagellant Governesses in the Seventeenth to Nineteenth Centuries

The earliest documentation of the secular Dominatrix profession is found within rare books of the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries, which reveal the identities and set-up of the women who ran flagellation establishments within England. From early flagellation brothel 'Whipstresses' to famous courtesan 'Birch Disciplinarians' and the 'Governesses' of the golden age, the occupational craft developed with elaborate tools and equipment, and was paired with refined skills and knowledge. Their profession was set up to cater to the fantasy desire of erotic domination by a powerful sexual woman, who was trained to be a strong disciplinarian figure. These female flagellants were savvy erotic entrepreneurs of their era whose clientele included the elite of the British aristocracy, politicians, and yes – even royalty.

It was to 'Her' that men reported, to worship and be disciplined by a superior woman, to be bound and punished, and put to pain and release; it was with 'Her' that they could share their non-normative longings and desires – in the company of someone with an open mind.

This chapter examines the male desire that informed the craft, the development of the niche occupation, and complex set-up and skills – informed by accounts in 'forbidden books' held within the vaults of the British Library's Rare Books collection, and from risqué prints of the era.

The Fantasy of 'a Phyllis'

The fantasy that informed the profession is the erotic image of the superior woman in a position of sexual power. Within art, this fantasy of female domination over a man was embodied by the popular Renaissance image of *Aristotle and Phyllis*. The image is one of a woman riding on a man's back, from the story of the famous philosopher Aristotle dominated by Phyllis, the paramour of Alexander the Great.

The story seemingly developed out of the thirteenth-century Middle Ages. Its narrative follows the ancient Greek philosopher Aristotle as teacher of Alexander (the Great), who taught Alexander that he should abstain from amorous relations with women, as they were a distraction from the serious work of great men. As a result, Alexander spurned his favourite lady, Phyllis.

She got her comeuppance. Moving in proximity to the great philosopher, her womanly charms proved too much for him. Aristotle became completely besotted with Phyllis and made amorous advances upon her, even though she was the lover of Alexander, his student. Phyllis shrewdly responded to Aristotle's sexual desires for her:

This I will certainly not do, unless I see a sign of love, lest you be testing me. Therefore, come to my chamber crawling on hand and foot, in order to carry me like a horse. Then I'll know that you aren't deluding me.¹

Aristotle came to Phyllis on all fours, as she requested, and she rode him on his back, like a horse, making him a subject of ridicule. The Great Aristotle was brought down to a lowly position by a woman in his desire.

Phyllis exemplified the archetype of the Dominatrix. The image was supposed to serve as a parable, a lesson on the power of a woman's erotic pull, and the consequences of succumbing to this. But the theme also provided a philosophical 'excuse' to make or hold an erotic image of female domination, for private erotic pleasure.

The theme proved very popular within the Renaissance period. Numerous artists took up the subject in paintings and engravings. There are household objects fashioned with this scene, such as metal

plates and aquamanile water jugs (see **Figure 17**). In some versions of the scene, Phyllis wields a whip or other implement of domination and holds reins, which are attached to a bit gag that Aristotle has in mouth.



Figure 17 *Phyllis Dominating Aristotle*, early fifteenth century. Aquamanile water jug. Originating from Maasland, Collection of European Decorative Arts, Jubilee Park, Brussels.

The artworks on the subject of Phyllis and Aristotle draw erotic ‘frisson’ in the power exchange of the sexes and subversion of conventional social gender roles. The woman’s crotch, the weight of her sex, presses down upon the man. She controls him from the top, making him an animal/slave in perverse service to her. In his state of arousal, desire and devotion, he is prepared to do anything to please her.

Two hundred years later in England, the same image recurs in mezzotint prints of a different ancient philosopher, Socrates, and his younger assertive wife Xanthippe (see **Figure 18**). There are a number of reasons that this substitution may have occurred.

Xanthippe was an historical figure who was known as being a 'difficult woman', but Socrates adored her. In the ancient *Symposium* by Xenophon, Xanthippe is a topic of conversation. She is said to be 'hard to get along with'. Socrates, too, agrees with this description of her with his comrades, but extols the benefits of a strong-minded woman, giving this speech in explanation to gathered friends:



Figure 18 *Socrates and Xanthippe*, c. 1670–1700. Mezzotint by John Smith. Yale Center for British Art.

It is the example of the rider who wishes to become an expert horseman: "None of your soft-mouthed, docile animals for me," he says; "the horse for me to own must show some spirit" in the belief, no doubt, if he can manage such an animal, it will be easy enough to deal with every other horse

besides. And that is just my case. I wish to deal with human beings, to associate with man in general; hence my choice of wife. I know full well, if I can tolerate her spirit, I can with ease attach myself to every human being else.²

The symposium of men take on board this explanation, understanding that for Socrates, his wife Xanthippe is like a high-mettled steed horse. (Today we might use the analogy of a woman being like a high-maintenance car.) She is strong, passionate, a virago, and Socrates prefers a woman like this, with some 'spirit', a dominant woman.

Xanthippe's name in Greek is derived linguistically from the 'horse' (or yellow horse), with connotations of good breeding, which may also have made the substitution more fitting. She is referred to in William Shakespeare's play *The Taming of the Shrew*, written around 1590–92. The play's main character, the difficult and spirited Katherina, is likened by Petruchio to 'Socrates' Xanthippe, or worse'.³ Other names used to refer to a shrew are 'termagant' and 'virago' – both of which are applied to Dominatrix-styled female disciplinarians in erotic literature and prints on flagellation.

The Dominatrix figure captured the imagination of a particular portion of the population. Certainly men whose sexual fantasies lay in this direction, if not women also who liked the idea of dominating. It also drew the attention of those who felt most threatened by this power exchange, for whom the image indexed their own internal anxieties and desire-belief system in tumult.

The positioning of a woman above a man was at odds with social norms (imposed by patriarchal religion and a class-based society), in which women held a different status and position from men. Women were, in generalised terms, supposed to be submissive and obedient to their husbands; while men were supposed to be dominant and in charge.

The Dominatrix archetype overthrows social norms and conventions, upholding a female position of superiority and power. The man is made submissive and obedient. He finds both sexual arousal and fulfillment in this role, in submission to a powerful

woman, and in the safety and structure of discipline and devotion.

It is this scenario that the occupation of the Dominatrix turned itself to and crafted, as a niche specialisation within the erotic arts. Leveraging off 'erotic capital' and the economics of supply and demand, the Dominatrix occupation begins with a consciousness of desire-demand. Women recognised the demand for the role, and pursued their curiosity and interest to learn more about a role they saw themselves well-suited to; a way to cater entrepreneurially.

The Dominatrix as a profession is a knowledge most often passed down by apprenticeship, with an experienced Dominatrix acting as teacher and mentor. It can also be developed afresh by a woman who learns of demand through would-be clients, men wanting her to enact the role.

Within the commercial market, the Dominatrix role has come to combine not only the power exchange of Domination/submission, but also a wide range of knowledge on different erotic fantasy role-play and fetishes, specialist practices with bespoke equipment, and the almost 'mystical' ability to intuit a client's deep-seated psychosexual needs. In England, the form that domination most frequently took was closely tied to the female authority figure who gave out school discipline and flagellation, which came to be known as *le vice Anglais* (the English vice).

Flogging Schools and their Cullies

The Dominatrix profession appears to have originated as a specialisation within brothels, before becoming its own niche craft. As far back as the 1590s, flagellation within an erotic setting is recorded, as in this rather crude epigram by John Davies:

When Francus comes to solace with his whoore [sic]
He sends for rods and strips himselfe stark naked:
For his lust sleeps, and will not rise before,
By the whipping of the wench it be awakened.⁴

As clients would seek out flagellation and other fantasies within brothels, a large number kept a few birch rods and whips to

accommodate the proclivities and desires of their customers. Some women within brothels gained a reputation for their aptitude at conducting scenarios. They were valued for their ‘command’ of the rod or whip administered with an air of authority, and their refined technique. ‘Flagellation schools’ came to be set up entirely in this niche, devoted exclusively to domination, discipline and role-plays. The women who took the Dominatrix role in the early English era were referred to as a ‘Whipstress’, ‘School Mistress’ or ‘Governess’.

Shadwell’s *Virtuoso* (1676) features a man who is described as a ‘product of Westminster-School’, and still finds delight in birch. He visits a ‘School-Mistriss’ [sic] ‘who keeps a very virtuous school for the disciplining of hopeful towardly Old Gentlemen’.⁵ Another historical source is Troth’s *Knavery of Astrology* (1680), which claims that ‘of late years, there’s a neat Invention called Flogging, invented on purpose to pleasure Old Fumblers, or weak Youngsters: what it is, they may easily find at Betty B_’s School, or Moorfields.’⁶

Although flogging was claimed to be a ‘new invention’, it was the word ‘flog’ that was new, rather than the act itself.

One of the earliest erotic prints in England is of a woman in a dominant flagellating role, and making use of this new term, the mezzotint is named *The Cully Flaug’d* [Flogged] (see **Figure 19**). Now housed within the British Museum collection, the work is believed to date around 1672–1702, engraved or after a painting by Laroon.⁷ Within the *mise en scène*, a young woman with her skirt hitched up back, wields a rod of birches, poised to ‘flog’ an old man. He is bent over a chair, buttocks exposed, with his face turned up; his gaze looks to take in the teasy eyeful of her vulva on display to him. Her vulva is not depicted in the print for the viewer to see, rather it is a fantasised image for the viewer’s imagination.



Figure 19 *The Cully Flaug'd*, c. 1674–1702. Mezzotint after Marcellus Laroon. British Museum.

The woman bears many hallmarks of the Dominatrix craft; she holds strong body language and stance, wielding the birch rod with confidence. Coins appear to be visible on the table, suggesting payment for service. There is also some deliciously amusing prose underneath the image:

What Drudgery's here, what Bridewell-like Correction!
To bring an Old Man to an Insurrection!
Firk on Fair Lady [,] Flaug the Fumbler's Thighs
Without such Conjuring th'Devil will not rise

'Insurrection' is an uprising, used to describe the upward shift in

social status, derived from *insurgere* (to rise up). Within the context of the prose, the uprising stands for a rising erection.

‘Firk’ was an old English term that meant ‘to beat, whip, lash, trounce, drub’,⁸ and in modern-day English ‘firk on’ is an imperative form to ‘proceed on’. While ‘flaug’ was the alternatively spelt word ‘flog’, meaning to whip. At that time, ‘flog’ was a term relatively new to the English language. The poem encourages the ‘Fair Lady’ to whip on, with her correction and punishment of the man, to bring him to a state of erection.

The prose also references Bridewell, the historical prison for punishment of the disorderly poor in London during this era.⁹ Dungeon or prison ‘scenarios’ (role-plays) are a common fantasy requested of modern-day Dominatrices. So ubiquitous is this scenario that the fantasy ‘dungeon chamber’ has become the most common playspace set up by Dominatrices to work in.

The relationship of the Dominatrix’s punishment and correction scenarios as parallel to the historical prison or dungeon is discussed within Ward’s *London Terrae-Filius* (1701). Ward discusses the case of a Mistress of a flogging school who suffered a raid on her ‘Academy of Titillation’:

the Whore-Hunting justice found the Lecher and his Whipstress hiding in a closet, surrounded by a great number of Flogging Instruments, for the secret flagellation of superannuated sodomites, ly’d with various ribbons of all colours. The Rods, some consisting of finer Twigs, and others thicker, distinguish’d from one another by the binding of the Handle, so that every Beast, from the Buff-Hided Leather to the Lamb-Skin’d Cully, understood by the Colour, how to call for a scourge that was the most agreeable to the tenderness of his Curtis. This Professor of Flogging Science and her companions were sent to Bridewell, that their lechery might be cool’d according to their own Exercise, with a Bull’s Pizzle, or a Cat-of-Nine-Tails ... Bridewell itself is something of a flogging school.¹⁰

Ward draws attention to the irony that the ‘Mistresses’ of such establishments risked being imprisoned and punished in Bridewell, exposed to similar treatment that they would normally be administering on their clients. Bridewell Prison carried out institutionally sanctioned discipline, while the flogging schools

carried out erotically sanctioned discipline.

Men who enjoyed floggings were known as ‘cullies’ (or in the singular, as ‘a cully’). In the *New Canting Dictionary* of 1725, a ‘flogging cully’ is described as: ‘a Naked Woman’s whipping (with Rods) an Old (usually) and (sometimes) a Young Lecher’.¹¹ A ‘cully’ was often portrayed as an old man suffering from erectile dysfunction in old age, who sought a flogging to cure his impotence. The term was used in this way to tease and denigrate men who held non-normative desires, who wished to submit to a woman for discipline-and-punishment fantasies. Wilson later addresses this stereotype, quick to point out that the Governesses’ clients were not only elderly, many were young as well, and what differentiated them was typically their educational background – coming from an upbringing or schooling in which corporal punishment was practiced. (A situation that holds true today.) She writes:

It is very true that there are innumerable old generals, admirals, colonels and captains, as well as bishops, judges, barristers, lords, commoners and physicians, who periodically go to be whipped, merely because it warms their blood, and keeps up a little agreeable excitement in their systems long after the power of enjoying the opposite sex has failed them; but it is equally true, that hundreds of young men, having been educated at institutions where the masters were fond of administering birch-discipline, and recollecting certain sensations produced by it, have imbibed a passion for it, and have longed to receive such chastisement from the hands of a fine woman.¹²

Flogging was thought to aid venereal functions, warming the blood and increasing blood flow to the region, as well as arousal. A well-known medical book on the topic of flagellation was titled, *A Treatise in the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs*, translated from Latin *De Usu Flagorum in re Medica et Venerea* (1639).¹³ It was written by the German physician Johann Heinrich Meibom, and underwent reprinting several times over, with introductory notes by Meibom’s son and Thomas Bartholin. The text puts forward:

that by flogging of the loins, and heating the reins, the matter of the seed is either quickened or increased, and how that should be performed by the

circulation of the blood in the reins ... to have recourse with you to the common cause, the heat of the blood, inflamed by flogging of the loins, to increase the warmth of the reins, and provoke a venereal appetite.¹⁴

When this treatise was reprinted in English in 1718 by the notorious Edmund Curll, the author's name was changed to an English equivalent (John Henry instead of Johann Heinrich), and a surname given a Latinate twist (Meibomius instead of Meibom). Curll also included an erotic flagellation scene as its frontispiece (see **Figure 20**).



Figure 20 *Erotic flogging scene*. Frontispiece to Edmund Curll's reprint of *A Treatise in the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs* (1718).

The erotic illustration depicts a domestic bedroom boudoir scene, in which a woman birches a man's buttocks while being watched by a second woman from the bed, and another two other figures looking in from the outside window. It is a voyeuristic flagellation 'seen'.

Any question of the intent of Curll to publish a purely medical/scientific text is negated by the book's erotic frontispiece. The book had originally made its way over from Europe in the latter part of the seventeenth century, circulating with and amongst a number of books that featured flogging and domination, and which raised consciousness of these activities and fantasies.

Another foreign import into England was the 'whore dialogue' of *Aloisiae Sigae*, written in Latin around 1660 in an attempt to conceal its origins as purportedly Spanish – it was in fact written by a Frenchman. It was republished in French two decades on, and soon after in English, under the new title of: *A Dialogue Between a Married Lady and a Maid*. The theme was an older woman educating a younger woman in sexual matters, including flagellation and contractual submission (which fills up a significant part of the book), as well as other types of sexual knowledge. The English publisher William Cademean was reportedly prosecuted in relation to this work, illustrating just how risqué such publications were in this era.

Another subversive publication from France was *Vénus Dans La Cloître* (c. 1682), attributed to Jean Barrin. It was translated in English as *Venus in the Cloister*, and republished by Edmund Curll in 1724–25. This book, along with the *Treatise in the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs* reprint, saw Edmund Curll in trouble with the law. He was arrested and held, and eventually charged with 'libel', as there was no 'obscenity law' that existed to charge him under at the time; and so developed the form of obscenity libel.

In 1748, John Cleland's book, *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure* (better known as *Fanny Hill*) was published in England, and proved influential to the rise in flagellation and demand for the service in England. The book featured its protagonist Fanny Hill accommodating the 'unusual' desires of Mr Barville within one scene, by orchestrating a flagellation and bondage scenario in which she both gives and receives a whipping:

I led him to the bench, and according to my cue, play'd at forcing him to lie down: which, after some little show of reluctance for form's sake, he submitted to; he was straightway extended flat upon his belly, on the bench,

with a pillow under his face; and he was thus tamely lay. I tied him tightly, hand and foot, to the legs of it; which done, his shirt remaining truss'd up overe the small of his back, I drew his breeches down to his knees; and now he lay, in all the fairest broadest display of that part of the pack-view; in which a pair of chubby, smooth-cheek'd and passing white posteriors rose cushioning upwards from two, stout fleshful thighs, and ending their cleft, or separation, by a union and the small of the back, presented a bold mark, that swell'd as it were, to meet the scourge ...

Seizing now one of the rods, I stood over him, according to his direction, gave him, in one breath, ten lashes with much goodwill and the utmost nerve and vigour of arm that I could put to them, so as make those fleshy orbs quiver again under them¹⁵

The book's author and publisher were arrested and charged, and the book was withdrawn from print. It continued to circulate as a 'forbidden book', sold from beneath the counter and passed around between acquaintances. Judging from the evidence of the day, it seems that the book was also largely responsible for making flagellation fantasies popular and driving the occupational role of the Dominatrix who would cater to these.

Turning Flagellation into a Fashion

An English engraving dating a few years after the notorious book *Fanny Hill* came out depicts a female authority figure wielding the birch rod (see **Figure 21**). She is attired in a dress and corset, which accentuate her fine figure. The man is in fashionable upper-class clothing of the era, with his bottom exposed and lined by marks of the rod. The fire burning in the centre of the scene acts as an elegant metaphor for the warmth invoked in effect by the woman bearing the rod.



Figure 21 *Flagellation engraving, 1752. Engraving by John June. Library of Congress, Washington D.C.*

The location is identified within the text beneath as ‘a House near Covent Garden’. It purports to be ‘the exact Representation of an Affair that lately happen’d to a young Gentleman’. He overhears in another room the ‘voice of a woman, like that of a School Mistress, whipping and scolding a Child’. But what excites his curiosity is the ‘the Masculine tone of the Delinquent, who begged forgiveness very heartily’. Coming into the scene via a private door, he finds an ‘elderly gentleman, remarkably well-known’, who leaves behind the note which is a dictation of the School Mistress who has had her pupil record for her:

Well of all the children I ever had in my school, you give me the most Trouble, here I am forced twice a Week to whip your Backside till the Blood comes. I am now resolved to give it you severely. Children look at his backside and take warning from it, while a vile naughty Boy he is! Yesterday he play’d Truant, & today he won’t eat his Bread and Butter without glass windows cut on it, but I’ll cut glass windows on his Arse.¹⁶

The passage ends with this satirical commentary:

we are entirely at a loss to how to explain this extraordinary Turn of the

Passions, or to say by what Method, this uncommon way of receiving pleasure operates: we must therefore refer the Solution of this paradox to the Royal Society and the College of Physicians, & should those learned Bodies fail of success, the dernière resort of our Hopes must be the deep Hebdomadal Researches of the Robin Hood Society.

The Robin Hood Society referred to, was a private club whose members were amongst the aristocracy. The engraving found its way into the Library of Congress collection in Washington DC. The upper classes were amongst the Dominatrix School-Mistress's biggest clients, the men for whom she flexibly offered a range of role-play scenarios to their fantasies. Although the School Mistress role was undoubtedly the most popular, she could alternatively play the role of Mother, Step-Mother, Aunt, Governess; or Lady Justice in judicial punishment.¹⁷ Playing the Fair Lady of medieval romance, or a dominant Venus with a whip, were all possible fantasy scenarios.

The 'role-play' variations of the profession are demonstrated by a book remarkable for its era. The small, underground publication, reportedly printed in France (to avoid trouble with authorities in England), was titled: *Fashionable Lectures: composed and delivered with Birch Discipline, by the following and many other beautiful Ladies, who have filled with universal approbation, the Character of Mother, Stepmother, Governess, Ladies Maid, Kept-Mistress, Housekeeper, &c, &c.* (c. 1761).¹⁸

It was published under the guise of being lectures or theatrical plays, but was in fact a veiled advertisement of 'Birch Disciplinarians', listing in its frontispiece some 57 women's names. It reads as a kind of 'who's who' of some of the most famous courtesans and ladies of their era, such as Fanny Murray, Nancy Parsons and Kitty Fisher – to name but a few. (See **Figure 22.**)

FASHIONABLE LECTURES:
 COMPOSED and DELIVERED
 WITH
 BIRCH DISCIPLINE
 BY THE FOLLOWING, AND MANY OTHER,
 BEAUTIFUL LADIES,
 WHO HAVE FILLED, WITH UNIVERSAL APPROBATION,
 THE CHARACTERS OF
 MOTHER, STEP-MOTHER, GOVERNESS,
 LADY'S MAID, KEPT-MISTRESS,
 HOUSE-KEEPER, &c. &c.

Mrs. R—nfon,	Mrs. Price,	Mrs. Booker,
Lady G——r,	Miss C—ver—ng,	Charlotte Spencer,
Mrs. M—h—n,	Clara Hay—d,	Mrs. Corbyn,
Mrs. B—n—ll,	Mother Birch,	Mrs. Judge,
The late Miss Kennedy,	Mrs. Arm——d,	Mrs. Far—ar,
Kit. Frederick,	Mrs. Cox,	Signora Frañ,
Lady W——ley,	Mrs. L—w—ce,	Signora G—lli,
Mrs. R——pe,	Mrs. Hughes,	Fanny Murray,
Madame B——lli,	Miss Scott,	Fanny Herbert,
Charlotte Hayes,	Miss Villers,	Miss Faulkner,
Mrs. Rudd,	Kitty Fisher,	Mrs. Woff—gton,
Miss C—t—,	Mrs. Austin,	Nancy Parsons,
Mrs. H—nter,	Lucy Cooper,	Signora Z—lli,
Mrs. Miller,	Sally Harris,	Mrs. Badd—ly,
Mrs. Bridgeman,	Lady L—n—er,	Miss Oliver,
Mrs. Baker,	Signora S——i,	Miss Goldsmith,
Mrs. Leffingham,	Kitty Cut-a-dash,	The Countess of Me-
Mrs. Watfon,	Mrs. Car—,	Mrs. Wil—n, [dina,
Mrs. Dal——ple,	Mrs. Bulk—y,	Miss Ray,

With PRELIMINARY OBSERVATIONS on the Pleasures of
 BIRCH, administered by the lovely hand of a
 FAVOURITE LADY.

The FOURTH EDITION, with CONSIDERABLE ADDITIONS.

L O N D O N :
 PRINTED FOR G. PEACOCK, No. 66, DRURY-LANE.

Figure 22 *Fashionable Lectures Delivered with Birch Discipline.*
 Frontispiece, listing the names of 57 ladies performing birch
 discipline.

Some of the ladies' names are partially blanked out or pseudonyms have been adopted to conceal identities. Some of the names appear to allude to the role they played, such as 'Mother Birch', the 'Countess de Medina' and 'Mrs Judge'. Interestingly there is also a deceased woman, the Late Miss Kennedy, included on the list, suggesting a

posthumous acknowledgement of her fine ‘services to birch discipline’. Or perhaps she had paid for the privilege of inclusion before her untimely passing.

Not all the women on the list were dedicated full-time Dominatrices. Some were actresses and prostitutes branching out (indeed ‘birch-branching’ out) in response to the increased demand for discipline and flagellation services, which were so fashionable in the era.

The following is the offer of temptation made to the book’s reader/purchaser:

All those purchasers of the Lectures, who have made a curiosity to judge of their effect when delivered with propriety, will be referred to a lady of distinguished personal and mental accomplishments, who, on proper compliment being made to her, will deliver any one of the Lectures, with all the eloquence and energy of impassioned voice and action happily united.

The lady has a house of her own, and her lecture room is furnished with rods, cat-o’-nine-tails, and some of the best prints on flagellation. The lady has a stout woman in her house, able to take a man on her back when he chuses [sic] to be treated like a schoolboy; and she and her maid are willing to be passive sometimes in the use of the rod, when required. Price of the delivery of the first Lecture, a Guinea – every lecture after, half a guinea, and half a crown to the maid if employed as a horse on the occasion.

N.B. Single gentlemen, who are fond of representing school-boys, waited on by mistress and maid at any hour, before they are up in the morning, at their own houses, where the delightful divertissement of being taken out of bed, horsed and whipt for not going to school, will be played out to admiration.¹⁹

A stunning mid-eighteenth-century marketing tie-in for the Birch Disciplinarians of the era. Savvy entrepreneurs? That they were.

Some of the ladies went on to become famous courtesans who published memoirs (or had biographies published about them). A number of these women were painted by talented artists, such as Nathaniel Hone, George Willison, James Northcote and Sir Joshua Reynolds (see **Figures 23, 24 and 25**).



Figure 23 George Beare, *Portrait of Peg Woffington*, c. 1749. Yale Center for British Art.



Figure 24 Nathaniel Hone, *Portrait of Kitty Fisher*, c. 1765.
National Portrait Gallery, London.



Figure 25 George Willison, *Nancy Parsons in Turkish Dress*, c. 1771. Yale Center for British Art.

These women were instrumental in their own self-constructed identity. Kitty Fisher, for example, took out a newspaper advertisement in 1759, deploring the constant exploitation of her persona by base scribblers and print sellers.²⁰ A few days later she went to see one of the best portrait artists of her day, Joshua Reynolds, to have him paint her.²¹ In this way she could control her own image. She would sit for Nathaniel Hone also, who made a portrait painting of her with a clever wordplay on her name: a cat reaching into a fishbowl, hence Kitty (cat) and Fish(er), to get 'Kitty Fisher' (see **Figure 24**).

The birch disciplinarian courtesans were amongst the regarded beauties of their era, whose taste in fashion influenced England's taste in fashion. Women would wear a 'Fanny Murray cap' when emulating the courtesan's style of wearing a broad-rimmed cap, or were said to

be attired in the 'Kitty Fisher style' of dress.

Numerous prints and paintings of these women are found in art galleries, museums and stately homes throughout the UK and in the US, and if one traces the 'accession line' of just how some of these paintings came to be in public galleries or museum collections by way of their provenance and ownership, one often arrives at an aristocratic patron of the lady concerned. (I offer no speculation as to the sexual proclivities of these contemporaries' great-great-great grandfathers.) Thousands of inexpensive prints and engravings were also run-off, and made accessible to the masses.

A scandalous poem entitled *An Essay on Women* (a pornographic parody of Alexander Pope's *An Essay on Men*) was dedicated to Fanny Murray. The poem was read out in sections to the House of Lords, where it was found to be obscene. It was linked to John Wilkes, who may or may not have been the work's true author, but it, in any, case led to his social downfall.

Kitty Fisher's name was immortalised within the famous nursery rhyme:

Lucy Locket lost her pocket
Kitty Fisher found it;
But ne'er a penny was there in it
Except the binding round it.

These 'fashionable ladies offering birch discipline' also had, in many cases, connections to members of the Beefeater Club in Dublin (of which Peg Woffington was president), and to the English Sublime Beefeater Club, which met at Covent Garden Theatre. Some of these women appeared as (masquerade) nuns at the 'Monks of Medmenham', a private club established by Sir Francis Dashwood, and later referred to as the 'Hellfire Club'. It was attended by John Montagu, the 4th Earl of Sandwich (whom Fanny Murray was for a time Mistress to) and its meetings were held around this period at the thirteenth-century Medmenham Abbey in Buckinghamshire, and referred to as the Monks of Medmenham.²² The club also had a connection to West Wycombe, where Dashwood had his residence and had caves dug out, and where Benjamin Franklin would come

and stay when he was visiting England. Some of the alternative names for the club allude to Wycombe, such as 'The Friars of St Francis of Wycombe', and its members were rumoured to include some names of very well-known nobles and politicians. The artist William Hogarth painted Dashwood as a Franciscan friar, and Benjamin Franklin is also reported as having attended Dashwood's club, although there is no hard evidence to prove this either way.

Just what went on at the club meetings? Delicious debauchery seems certain, but the exact nature of its rituals are the stuff of legend and rumour. Costumes, including masquerade as monks and nuns, were reported. Indeed there is a print of Fanny Murray with her signature cap, holding a mask with the British Museum collection, and a painting by Henry Morland entitled *The Fair Nun Unmasked* illustrating the costume worn at these parties, with mezzotints made after the painting (see **Figure 26**).



Figure 26 James Wilson, *The Fair Nun Unmask'd*, c. 1770.
 Mezzotint made after Henry Morland painting, Yale Center for
 British Art.

Inscribed: 'On her white Breast a sparkling Cross she wore, Which
 Jews might kiss and Infidels adore – POPE'

The club was a 'burlesque institution' that made a subversive mockery of religious seminaries Dashwood had visited on his grand tour, which in his view contradicted logic and reason. In place of austerity and abstinence, the 'monks' practiced gaiety, hilarity and felicity.²³ Dashwood is also known to have held celebrations themed

to acknowledge particular ancient Gods and Goddesses in accord with the dates of classical-themed pagan festivities, and had sculptures of Venus and other deities in his residence.

The connection between these 'Fashionable Ladies' to private club members, gives some indication of the client base these women had. Not all of their clients necessarily received birch discipline, however, and some were more likely to have been giving it out than receiving. The birch disciplinarians offered what is known as a 'Switch-Mistress' service in modern-day terms. This meant that they were able to give out discipline, or receive it, by negotiation in role-play scenarios.

Amongst the English upper classes, going to visit a female flagellant School Mistress establishment had become *de rigueur*. Domination, bondage and flagellation fantasies were discussed between friends and acquaintances, and the 'Birch Mysteries' were a part of the lives of private society members. Fine School Mistresses' names were passed on by referral, and well-patronised.

The fashion for flagellation provided a market for flagellation books, featuring scenarios in school settings and aristocratic boudoirs. In England, series of books were published such as *The Exhibition of the Female Flagellants* books, printed around 1777 and 1785 as Part I and II. The precise dating of these books is very difficult to ascertain, as such 'forbidden books' were printed with false imprints and dates, pseudonymous pen names for the author, and publishers would frequently move address to avoid detection.

The Golden Age of the Governess

The passion for flagellation and 'Female Flagellants' did not slow down, and by the turn of the century, 'Governesses' were whipping up a storm in London. No less than 20 splendid establishments are documented to have existed by the 1840s, and were supported entirely by flagellation practice.²⁴ These were 'Houses of Discipline', which were distinct from brothels. In the Preface of the book *The Venus School-Mistress*, a woman named Mary Wilson describes the qualities of a (Dominatrix) Governess:

Those women who give most satisfaction to the amateurs of the discipline, are called *governesses*, because they have by experience acquired a tact and a *modus operandi*, which the generality do not possess. It is not merely the keeping of a rod, and being willing to flog, that would cause a woman to be visited by worshippers of the birch: she must have served her time to some other woman who understood her business, and be thoroughly accomplished in the art. They must have a quick and intuitive method of observing the aberrations of the human mind, and be ready and willing to humour and relieve them.²⁵

The author appears to have been a Governess herself during this era, and a colleague of Mrs Theresa Berkley.²⁶ She hit the nail on the head (or the birch on the bottom) as to what it is that makes a great Governess. The ‘art’ of the Governess was in the intuitive understanding of the psychology of her clients, alongside the mastery (or rather, the ‘Mistressery’) of her technique. The knowledge and approach of a good Governess was acquired via an apprenticeship to an experienced practitioner.

Wilson lists a number of names of well-known Governesses of the preceding eras. Mrs Chalmers and Mrs Noyeau who had formerly been two of the most experienced governesses, and by that time were retired from business. The late Mrs Jones of Hertford Street and London Street, Fitzroy Square; the late Mrs Theresa Burkley; Bessy Burgess of York Square and Mrs Pyree of Burton Crescent.²⁷ The Governess Dominatrix had become a relatively well-known occupation, and one which in this ‘golden era’ had been paralleled by a marked professionalism in set-up and equipment.

The late Theresa Berkley who died in 1836 was one of the most famous English Dominatrix Governesses, singled out by a number of writers. She had her discipline establishment at Charlotte Street (now Hallam Street), off Portland Place in Marylebone, and seemingly took the profession of domination to a whole new level in England. She designed a specialist flagellation frame with bondage fixing points in 1828, which was known as ‘The Berkley Horse’ (see **Figure 27**).²⁸



Figure 27 *The Berkley Horse*, designed 1828 by Governess Dominatrix Theresa Berkley.

This apparatus became a ‘must-have’ item for all serious Governess. (Mrs Stewart, Mrs Pryce, Mesdames Collett and Beverley were all noted as having one.) The Berkley Horse was loosely based on the wooden ladders that had already been adapted for use by Governesses. An illustration of *putti* (cherub-like creatures) flogging against a wooden ladder was incorporated within the frontispiece to *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (see **Figure 28**), and evidences the similarity in its basic form from which the Berkley Horse was adapted.

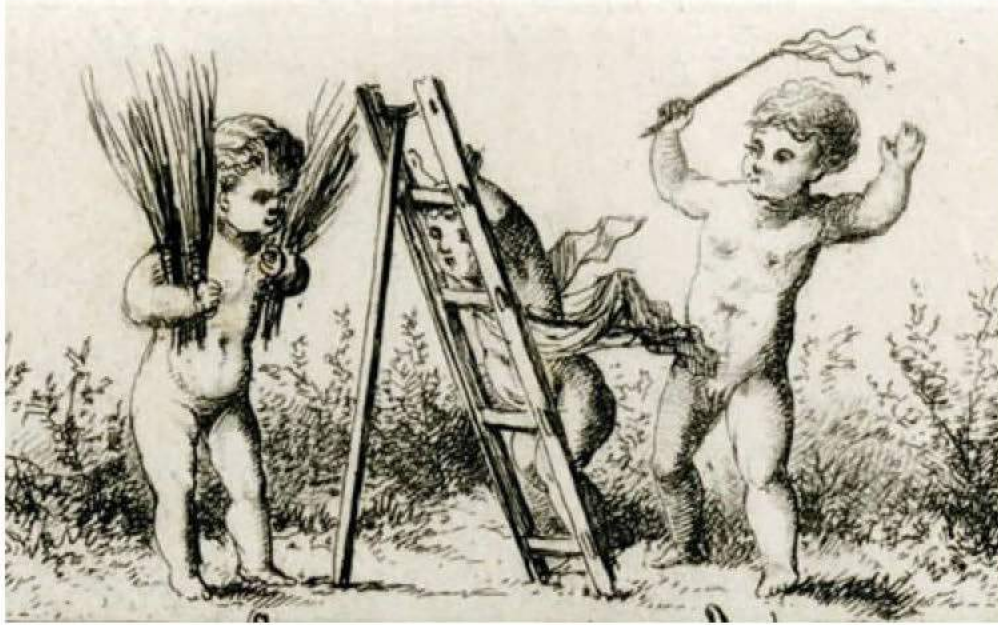


Figure 28 Detail of putti flogging, both from Henry Spencer Ashbee's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*.

Berkley's design was a much more bespoke and elegant solution, which provided for secure whipping against a relatively comfortable padded frame. Holes were cut out from the facing board's frame, which was not meant merely for positioning of the head, but for access to particular body parts. Within Berkley's memoirs was reportedly a print of a man strapped naked to the frame, with a woman sitting in a chair under it 'with her bosom, belly and bush exposed ... manualizing his embelon', whilst Theresa Berkley birched his posterior.²⁹

Pleasure and pain was administered simultaneously from each direction. The cutouts within the frame's design also allowed for simulated torture or pleasure of the nipples and genitals, at the same time as receiving a birching or the whip. Theresa Berkley also had a suspension system – a hook and pulley on her second floor, to 'draw a man up by her hands', as part of her highly specialised equipment.

Her supply of birch was extensive, and kept in water, so that it was always green and pliant, and had shafts with a dozen whip-thongs on each of them; a dozen different sizes of cat-o'-nine tails, some with needle points worked into them; various kind of thin bending canes; leather straps like coach

traces, battledores, made of thick sole-leather, with inch nails run through to docket, and curry-comb tough hides rendered callous by many years of flagellation. Holly bushes, furze brushes, a prickly evergreen, called butcher's bush; and during the summer, glass and China vases, filled with a constant supply of green nettles, with which she often restored the dead to life. Thus, at her shop, whoever went with plenty of money, could be birched, whipped, fustigated, scourged, needle-pricked, half-hung, holly-brushed, furze-brushed, butcher-brushed, stinging-nettled, curry-combed, phlebotomized, and tortured till he had a bellyful.³⁰

Although Theresa Berkley was predominantly a dominant (i.e. Dominatrix) Governess, she was also a 'Switch-Mistress', who would on occasion submit, to an extent, to receiving punishment from her clients as well as giving it. However, 'if they were gluttons at it', as Wilson notes, Theresa Berkley 'had women in attendance who would take any amount of lashes the flogger pleased, provided he forked out an ad valorem duty'. The names of the women who received punishment at her establishment were: 'Miss Ring, Hannah Jones, Sally Taylor, One-eyed Peg, Bald-cunted Poll and a black girl called Ebony Bet'.

The system of apprenticeship at Berkley's establishment meant women could work for her while learning the craft. They would gain knowledge of the psychology, role-play scenarios, equipment and techniques, before going on to become a Governess themselves. Hannah Jones, for example, is listed as one of the women who received punishment at Berkley's house. She went on to become a Governess under the name Griffiths.³¹

What did it take to become a great Governess Dominatrix, besides learning the skills of flagellation, bondage and role-play? Wilson speaks to what made Mrs Theresa Berkley a woman who was 'in every way adapted to her profession':

She possessed the first grand requisite of a courtesan, viz, lewdness: for without a woman is positively lecherous, she cannot keep up long the affection of it, and will be soon perceived that she only moves her hands or her buttocks to the tune of pounds, shillings and pence. She could assume great urbanity and good humour; she would study every lech, whim, caprice and desire of her customer, and had she the disposition to gratify them, her avarice was rewarded in return.³²

The term 'lewdness' embodied a genuinely held open-mindedness, a libertine attitude to eroticism. This mindset, alongside the understanding and intuition of the minds of her clients, were an important part of the Governess's approach, just as much so as the technical skills of birching and so forth.

Another major source of information on the Governesses of the era comes from Henry Spencer Ashbee's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* ('Index of Forbidden Books'), published in 1877 under the pseudonym of Pisanus Fraxi. Ashbee was to the public's view – a consummate Victorian gentleman. In his private life, though, he hid a secret 'erotomania', collecting numerous editions of erotica, and even taking out rooms in Gray's Inn Square to accommodate his collection. Ashbee is also believed to be the pseudonymous 'Walter' of the book *My Secret Life*, based on a man's sexual development and adventures in the Victorian era.³³

Upon his death, Ashbee bequeathed his enormous collection of books and erotica to the British Museum. The erotic material would go into the infamous 'Private Case' of the British Museum, where its contents were 'protected' (i.e. restricted) from women and the lower classes, for it was believed in this era that they would corrupt those of weak mind and constitution. As the social attitudes changed in more modern times, the forbidden books of the 'Private Case' were moved into the Rare Books collection of the British Library, where they can now be viewed.

Amongst the Rare Books collection is Ashbee's own copy of his *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, which devotes a significant portion of space to discussing the topic of 'Flagellation'. Ashbee's sources were the *Venus School-Mistress* 'Foreword' written by Mary Wilson (previously discussed), and a handwritten letter from his friend and crony in Paris, Frederick Hankey. This original handwritten letter is still preserved in Ashbee's own personal copy of his *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*, and is one of the main sources of information on the (Dominatrix) Governesses of the era.

The book is restricted from access, not from women and lower classes, as was historically the situation when it was in the 'Private

Case', but due to its rarity and fragility. A page of this letter shows Hankey's hard-to-read handwritten scrawl (see **Figure 29**). The letter is dated 26 May 1875, and its contents appear to be in response to a request from Ashbee to write to him with information on the flagellation establishments and the women who ran them.

Although it is difficult to decipher the handwriting, a fine attempt is made by Ian Gibson in his biography of Ashbee, *The Erotomaniac*.³⁴ The full letter of Frederick Hankey (deciphered by Gibson) reads:

The first establishment known by me over the last fifty years where the practice of the rod was carried on to a great extent was held by Mrs Collett in Tavistock Court, Convent Garden, from whence she removed into the neighborhood of Portland Place – and then to Bedford Street, Russell Square, where she died – George the 4th is known to have been in her house – She brought up a niece in the same line, and who as Mrs. Mitchell carried on a great business in the same line, in various places, and finally in St Mary's Square, Kennington, where she died.

Then came Mrs James who had been maid in the family of Lord Clarincade – she had a house in Carlisle St, but eventually retired from business with a good fortune, a villa at Notthing Hill [sic], and a house in Quebec Street – with pictures and jewels without end.

No one ever surpassed in this particular line Mrs Theresa Berkley who lived and died in Charlotte St, Portland Place, no.28 – A few days after her death her brother who had been a missionary for 30 years in Australia arrived, and found that she had bequeathed to him 12,500 pounds in the funds, besides other property – but when he learnt the source from which it had been derived he renounced all claim and immediately went back to Australia – In default the property was to go to Dr. Vance of Saville Row, her medical attendant, but he also refused to administer, the whole was escheated to the crown – She never destroyed a letter, and Dr Vance as executor received several boxes full, which he allowed the writer to examine. They were of the most extraordinary character, from the highest personages, male and female, in the land –

Mrs Potter carried on a good business a few years ago near Tottenham Court Road, but being sentenced to imprisonment for getting some young girl birched by one of her customers was ruined – There were several others whose names and addresses I forgot – all made fortunes –

The only establishment I know of now is in the Regent's Park, a lovely little villa presided over by a well-educated lady, well versed in birchen mysteries.

Her clientele is small but select, consisting of a few persons belonging to the highest order of society –

The birch at most of these places was provided by one Mrs Potter living at Walworth –

In my experience I have known personally several ladies of high rank who had an extraordinary passion for administering the rod, and that with merciless severity – I knew too the wife of a clergyman, young and pretty, who carried the taste to excess – I have known only one who liked to receive it, and she was quite of the lowest order – when excited by drink she would allow herself to be birched until the bottom was utterly raw, and the rods saturated in blood, she crying out during the operation, ‘Harder, Harder’, and blaspheming if it was not well laid in – At the establishment I have named in Regent’s Park, there come two very young girls who go through all the phases of a school-mistress and whip fearfully severely –

The programmes sent by ‘pupils’ are extraordinary – some like to be whipped as children across the knee – some on the back of a servant, others to be strapped down –

A friend of Hankey who had been a governess in a family in England, used the rod most cleverly – she is French, but is going to be married next week, and to the loss of the lovers of the discipline.

I could give many anecdotes connected with this business. I write in post haste, starting today for Paris.³⁵

2
To one over scribbled in the
particular line Mr. Thoreau
Barkly who lived and died
in Charlott. St. R. M. and Mace
on 28 - A few days after her
death her brother who had been
a missionary for 30 years in
Australia arrived, & found he
had left her £125000
in the funds, besides the property -
but when he learnt the value
from what it had been desired
he renounced the claim, and
wrote it all back to
Australia - In default the



Figure 29 Page of handwritten letter from Frederick Hankey to Ashbee. Ashbee's own annotated personal copy of *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*. Rare Books, British Library.

Ashbee added several other Governesses to Hankey's list when

writing about them in his completed book, suggesting his own personal knowledge of the topic also. These included Mrs Emma Lee (real name Richardson), of 50 Margaret Street, Regent Street; Mrs Phillips of 11 Upper Belgrave Place in Pimlico; and Mrs Shepherd of 25 Gilbert Street. Ashbee notes that he could list a number of other Governesses currently operating, were it not indiscreet to do so. It is a tribute of respect that clients kept their Governesses' confidences, not making references to their name until after they were retired, or had passed away.

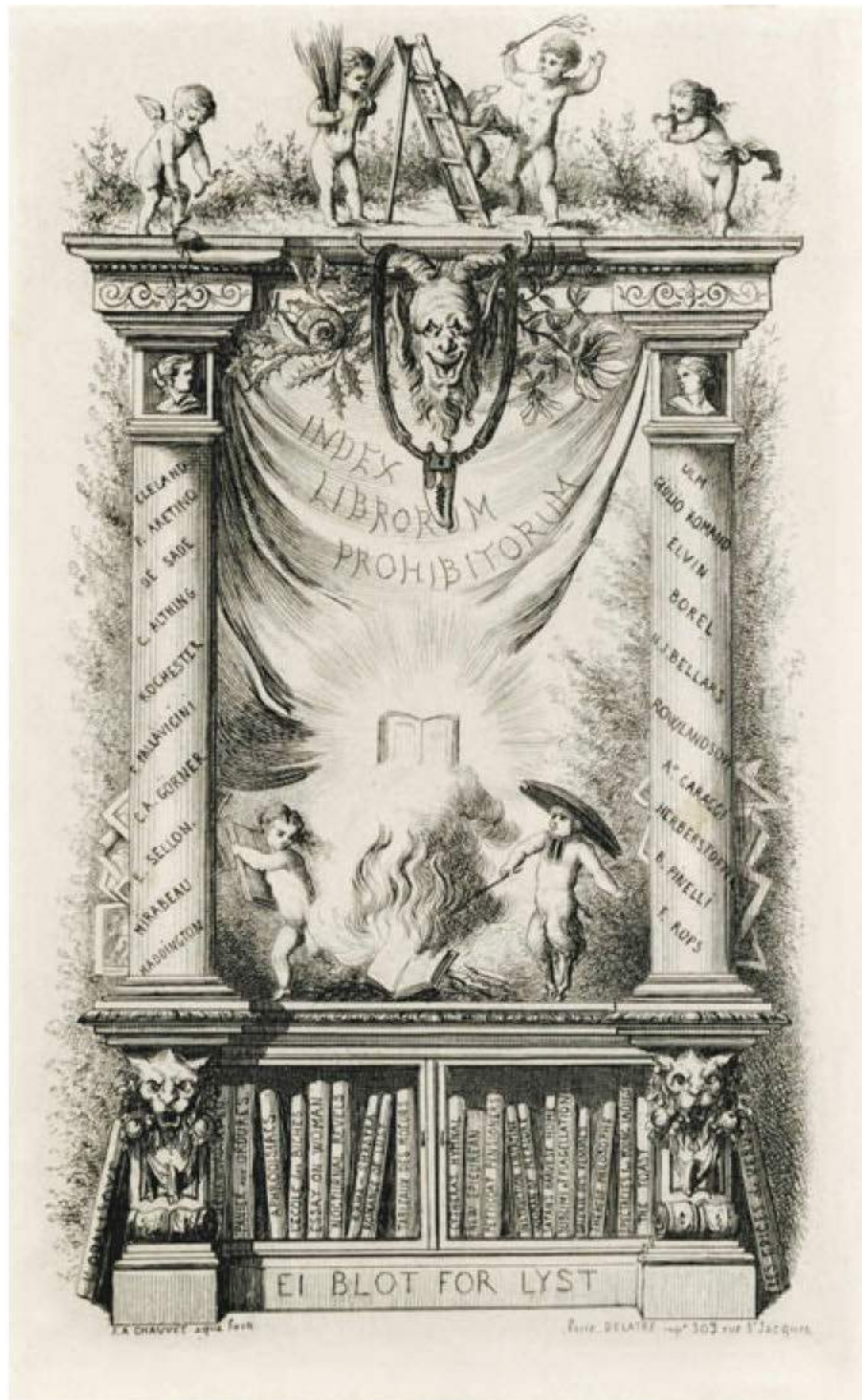


Figure 30 Frontispiece to *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* – *Index of Forbidden Books*. Privately published by Pisanus Fraxi (pseudonym of Henry Spencer Ashbee) in 1877.

The title of Ashbee's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum: being Notes Bio-*

Biblio- Icono-graphical and Critical, on Curious and Uncommon Books is a tongue-in-cheek reference to the Catholic Church's own list of forbidden publications – also named *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (*Index of Forbidden Books*). Amongst the Catholic Church's 'forbidden books' over the years (and right up until the 1960s) were titles by Galileo Galilei, Blaise Pascal, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Victor Hugo, Immanuel Kant, David Hume, René Descartes, Voltaire, Casanova, Francis Bacon, Balzac, Émile Zola, Gustave Flaubert, Marquis de Sade, Madame de Stael, Alexandre Dumas, John Stuart Mill, George Sand, Martin Luther, Jean-Paul Sartre, through to the feminist Simone de Beauvoir. With the benefit of hindsight, these 'forbidden books' made up a list of the most innovative and independent thinkers of their era. At the time, though, their work was perceived as a threat to the Catholic Church's doctrine and ideology.

The frontispiece to the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* references this history (see **Figure 30**) of banning and burning books. In general, that which a person or institution bans, burns, locks away, censors or marks with a red 'X', they simultaneously mark as holding power. Those who most busy themselves in banning books and information, index their own belief system in torrent and contradiction at odds with reality. They censor what echoes with some kernel of truth, and with it an immense power, conflicting with or contradicting the ideology that they seek to impose – by force – on everyone else.

Censorship appears to have claimed as its victim the memoirs of Theresa Berkley. Her autobiographical papers, which were to be published, are noted in several historical sources, and were reportedly destroyed. Their publication had been keenly anticipated, with the *Venus School-Mistress* book featuring an advertisement for the book 'in the press':

The Autobiography of the late Theresa Berkley, of Charlotte St, Portland Place, containing anecdotes of the present Nobility, and others, devoted to erotic pleasures, with numerous plates.³⁶

The memoirs were also elsewhere referred to as the 'Berkley Papers', as Berkley had reportedly kept all her 'papers', which

comprised several boxes full of letters sent to her from her willing slaves and students-for-punishment – these were noted as including ‘some of the highest personages of the land’. All references to names were to be removed for publication, with Mary Wilson noting, ‘no nobleman’s or gentleman’s name will be exposed’.³⁷

Upon Berkley’s death, these boxes of her papers passed to her executor Dr Vance.³⁸ Publication was, however, reportedly held up at Dr Vance’s request. His death was expected to ‘enable the firm, who hold the copyright of her autobiography to put it to press’.³⁹ Ultimately, though, the papers were reportedly destroyed.

The factors that played out in these events are the subject of hypothesis and speculation. Theresa Berkley evidently trusted in her medical attendant Dr Vance to have appointed him as the executor of her will. It may have been that Dr Vance was a private supporter (and possibly client) of Berkley’s during her lifetime. Upon her death, however, it would appear that he sought to distance himself from her occupation. When Theresa Berkley’s brother, a missionary residing in Australia, turned down the fortune of £12,500 left to him by his sister (upon learning ‘its source’), it ceded to Dr Vance, who turned down the money also.

Berkley was seemingly betrayed posthumously by Dr Vance, whose behavior appears to reveal two faces; the private face looking in admiration and support of Theresa Berkley – and the public face looking with concern to his reputation and the judgment of others.

Perhaps others were also pressing on Dr Vance during his lifetime. The ‘nobles and highest personages of the land’ who were amongst Berkley’s clients, may have wanted to avoid the publication of her autobiography, for fear of being identified by the ‘language, style and sentiments’, and thus embarrassed by their private desires.⁴⁰ Or perhaps the threat of persecution or prosecution influenced Dr Vance’s directive to suspend publishing, as the publication was, after all, intended to include the print of a man being birched naked on her Berkley Horse with his ‘embelon manualized’, amongst other illustrations.

The only fragments seemingly left of Berkley's autobiography and papers are those left in their description made by others. It is always possible of course that somewhere in England, tucked away in a cupboard, a person connected in this chain, related to the typesetting and printing, has a salvaged copy or printer's proof tucked away, despite all the material being supposedly destroyed. We can but hope. One letter from her papers was reproduced as a 'unique exemplar' within the 'Preface' to *The Venus School-Mistress*. According to Wilson, the letter was by a 'very good-humoured and tolerant Catholic', a gentleman 'who used to bring chains to fasten his neck, hands and feet more securely to the horse'. He writes:

Dublin, Jan. 1834.

Dear Madam,

I am the most incorrigible "naughty boy", and have been flogged by the most noted governesses in London, without having my vices scourged out of me. The gentleman who goes by the name of Brunswick recommended to me Mrs Brown, and she had a pretty strong arm. He they call "Bawdy Blue Eyes", sent me to Mrs Wilson, of Mary-la-bone, and she was no chicken at it. Old Jaunay, of Leicester Square, the hotel-keeper, proposed Ms Chalmers, and she is a very experienced hand. Mr Plume invited me to dine with the Stranger, and Mr G at the genteel and elegantly furnished residence of Madame Noyeau; but even her tall and robust figure could not make a sufficient impression on my backside; he they designate as "Sheep Face", wished me to try Jones, of London Street, but she and all her helps were too drunk to break a rod on me. Captain Johnson insisted on my visiting Betsy Burgess, who is certainly clever, but who has left the *Diable au Corps*. Lord A_y sent me to Gordon, but she had lost Mrs Potter's address, and was out of rods. Brookes, the bookseller of Bond Street, gave me the card of Mesdames Collet and Beverley, and surely I found them as knowing dames as any in London; but even their united energies have left me unconquered. I have now, my dear Madam, got a recommendation from your particular friend, the Earl of G_e, who has made my blood boil with delight, by describing your horse and charming apparatus, for tickling the tobys of us naughty boys. I shall be with you early in February, as the Earl and myself are coming over together, on our parliamentary duties; but to prevent no misunderstanding, I send you my ten, beforehand:

To be well secured to the horse with the chains I bring.

One pound for the first blood drawn.

Two pounds if the blood runs down to the heels.

Three pounds if it reaches my heels.
Four pounds if it flows to the floor.
Five pounds if you cause me to faint away.

I am, my dear Madam,
Yours most incorrigibly,
TROBENIUS O'FLUNKEY

O'Flunkey's letter gives some indication as to how the Governesses got 'word out' to prospective clients; by way of word-of-mouth amongst hotel keepers, aristocracy and acquaintances who shared a love of the birch and of the female authority figure.

The Dominatrices not only left their mark on the bottoms of nobility, they also left their mark as talented practitioners and savvy businesswomen of their era. Developing their business establishments with specialist tools and equipment, and honing their craft, they acquired and passed on their knowledge to trainees as a batten of erotic female wisdom.

These were no 'fallen women', but erotic entrepreneurs. They achieved wealth by the arts of their courtesanerie and domination, and were significantly 'in command' of their lives, their sexuality, their skills and their own crafted self-image.

Endnotes

- 1 Anonymous Latin text, quoted in Halldór Smith, J. E. 'Phyllis Rides Aristotle' (2013) (<http://www.jehsmith.com/1/2013/04/phyllis-rides-aristotle.html>), 2 April 2013.
- 2 Xenophon, *Symposium*, ch. 2, sec. 10.
- 3 Shakespeare, W. *The Taming of the Shrew*, Act I, Scene 2.
- 4 Cited in Jones, M. 'Print of the Month: The Cully Flaug'd', British Printed Images (BPI) (<http://www.bpi1700.org.uk/research/printOfTheMonth/december> December 2007.
- 5 Shadwell, 'Virtuoso IV' in Williams, G. *A Dictionary of Sexual Language & Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* (London, 1994), pp. 513–14.

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- 7 Jones, M. 'Print of the Month: The Cully Flaug'd', British Printed Images (<http://www.bpi1700.org.uk/research/printOfTheMonth/december> December 2007).
- 8 *Oxford English Dictionary*: 'To beat, whip, lash, trounce, drub', citing *British Apollo*, no. 9. 3/1 (1708), cited in Jones, M. 'Print of the Month: The Cully Flaug'd'.
- 9 See for example: 'Bridewell Prison and Hospital', *London Lives 1690–1800, Crime, Prison and Social Policy in the Metropolis* (<http://www.londonlives.org/static/Bridewell.jsp>).
- 10 Ward, *London Terrae-Filius* l 22 in Williams, G. *A Dictionary of Sexual Language & Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature* (London, 1994), pp. 513–14).
- 11 *New Canting Dictionary* in Williams, G. *A Dictionary of Sexual Language & Imagery in Shakespearean and Stuart Literature*, pp. 513–14.
- 12 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson' (this edition dating between 1836–77), *Venus School-Mistress or Birchen Sports* (Birchopolis, 1917), p. 5.
- 13 Meibom, J. H. *De usu flagorum in re Medica et Veneria, lumborumque & renum officio De Usu* (1638) reprinted under the English title: *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs* (Birchgrove Press, 2010).
- 14 Bartholin, T. in Meibom, J. H. *A Treatise of the Use of Flogging in Venereal Affairs*. (NB: The original Latin text was published in 1639, translated and reprinted in English in 1718 by Edmund Curll, and many other times.)
- 15 Cleland, J. *Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure or Fanny Hil*, reprint (Wordsworth Classics, 2001), p. 161.
- 16 See text below 'Flagellation' print, Figure 13.

- 17 See Thomas Major print book illustration (1763), after Gravelot, from the British Museum collection (ref. no. 1857,0217.83).
- 18 *Fashionable Lectures: composed and delivered with Birch Discipline, by the following and many other beautiful Ladies, who have filled with universal approbation, the Character of Mother, Stepmother, Governess, Ladies Maid, Kept-Mistress, Housekeeper, &c, &c.* Originally published c. 1761, and republished 1872 by Library Illustrative of Social Progress no.7. J.C Hotten Publishing, London. Also cited in Hurwood, B. J. *The Golden Age of Erotica* (Sherbourne Press, 1965), p. 162.
- 19 Emphasis my own. Hurwood, B. J. *The Golden Age of Erotica*, pp. 162–63.
- 20 Dabhoiwala, F. *The Origins of Sex: A History of the World's First Sexual Revolution* (Penguin Books, 2012).
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- 22 Mannix, D. P. *The Hellfire Club: The Underground Classic* (I Books, 2001); Ashe, G. *The Hellfire Clubs: A History of Anti-Morality* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2001); Lord, E. *The Hellfire Clubs: Sex, Satanism and Secret Societies* (Yale University Press, 2010).
- 23 *The Nocturnal Revels of King's Place and Other Modern Nunneries, Containing Their Mysteries, Devotions and Sacrifices* (London, 1877).
- 24 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson', p. 6.
- 25 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson', p. 6.
- 26 Mary Wilson has been assumed to be a pseudonym, but in fact a 'Mrs Wilson' is noted as a governess during this period, with a letter sent by a client reproduced at the end of the *Venus School-Mistress* 'Preface' by Trobenius O'Flunkey actually makes reference to a Mrs Wilson of Marylebone.
- 27 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson', p. 6.
- 28 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson', p. 7.
- 29 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson', p. 7.

- 30 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson', p. 6.
- 31 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson', p. 10.
- 32 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson', p. 6.
- 33 Walter *My Secret Life* (1877); see also: Gibson, I. *The Erotomaniac: The Secret Life of Henry Spencer Ashbee* (London: Faber and Faber, 2001).
- 34 Gibson, I. *The Erotomaniac: The Secret Life of Henry Spencer Ashbee*, pp. 45–47.
- 35 Gibson, I. *The Erotomaniac: The Secret Life of Henry Spencer Ashbee*, pp. 45–47. NB: The author has personally examined this letter, for which a page of has been reproduced here for the first time.
- 36 Noted in Ashbee's *Index Librorum Prohibitorum* (1877), footnote 64.
- 37 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson', p. 8.
- 38 Wilson says Dr Vance is of Cork Street, and Hankey says Vance is of Saville Row and was Berkley's medical attendant. (It is possible he moved from Cork Street to Saville Row, and so both sources may be correct).
- 39 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson', p. 8.
- 40 Wilson, M. 'Preface by Mary Wilson', p. 8.

Chapter III

The Bizarre Dominant Ladies of the Twentieth-Century Underground

Discreet Dominatrices and their Vanishing Acts

In the mid-twentieth century, professional Dominatrices undertook their practices in a very discreet and underground manner. Indeed, they were so discreet – that they’ve made themselves very difficult to trace. Almost nothing exists of them within the historical record. Their marketing was mainly in the form of whispered word-of-mouth amongst lovers of dominant women and fetishists. In the 1950s–60s, their advertising consisted of ephemeral little cards placed in the windows of tobacconists in Soho and in telephone boxes.

EX-SCHOOLMISTRESS (degrees) gives private education tuition general education subjects, afternoons and evenings. Difficult pupils specially welcomed. Strict disciplinarian.¹

Words like ‘strict’, ‘firm’, ‘control’ and ‘disciplinarian’ were used to indicate the advertiser was a Dominatrix flagellation specialist.²

Some were known by a name; Miss __ or Mrs __, but it was usually a false name they had adopted. In fact, in some cases a Dominatrix would use an array of multiple pseudonyms.

Most Dominatrices worked out of a private apartment. They would keep a wardrobe of ‘bizarre’ fetish attire for themselves and their clients, along with a few pieces of custom furniture and equipment for bondage and discipline. In some countries, most particularly in Northern Europe, Dominatrices would operate in red-light districts, differentiated from prostitutes by their thigh-high boots, dominant

stare and whip in their window display.

Trying to track these women down in the era prior to fetish magazine publications proves to be a challenging task. Upon retirement, a Dominatrix would typically sell off her equipment and simply disappear. It didn't take long for her name to be taken out of currency, unknown to the apartment's new tenants. No forwarding address was left, nor was a 'real' name known by which she could be traced. In fact all that was left behind to show for her former existence was her image and memory in the mind of her colleagues, clients and women who apprenticed under her. Her former equipment and clothing would also often continue in use by those she had passed it on to.

Few avenues are available for researching these early 'bizarre' fetish Dominatrices of the twentieth century. Thankfully, however, fetish magazine editors David Jackson (of *DDI* magazine) and Bert Wibo (of *Massad* magazine) had met some of these early Dominatrices in the mid-twentieth century, or had heard a lot about their operations through their acquaintances. Recognising the future importance of this material, Jackson put together what he called the 'Domina Files'. These files comprised valuable biographical information on early Dominatrices, providing details of where and when they had operated, their set-up, and vintage photographs taken of them.

The other source of information on early Dominatrices is found in newspapers, from the odd occasion when a Dominatrix made the headlines, such as following a police raid. Most famous was the case of the Dutch Dominatrix, Monique von Cleef, who had her home in Newark, New Jersey raided just days before Christmas of 1965. The story made headlines across virtually every region of the US, making her a notorious celebrity. Von Cleef was jailed, but in the end won a US Supreme Court challenge, finding that the police had abused their powers in their search-and-seizure. She moved to The Hague, set up a new 'House of Pain' and co-authored a biography of her life (see later section in this chapter).

Before discussing the stories of these mid-twentieth-century

Dominatrices, it is important to note that many of the photographs of Dominatrices circulating on the Internet are not real Dominatrices at all.

Elegant Posers and the Bizarre Dominatrix

The elegant early twentieth century photographs supposedly of Dominatrices that circulate all over the Internet, are almost all a beautiful fantasy illusion of models staged in Dominatrix role, posing for commercial fetish studio photographers.

One of the main operators producing images of domination around the art deco period was the Biederer Studio and its successor Ostra, based in Paris. Run by Czech photographer Jacques and his brother Charles Biederer, who immigrated to Paris in 1908 and 1913 respectively, their studio evolved from conventional imagery to soft erotica and what may be called 'fetish photography', much of which dates to the interwar period of the 1920s and 1930s (see **Figures 31 and 32**).





Figures 31 and 32 Models for Jacques Biederer, Paris (c. 1930s).

The studio was sheltered in a discreet workshop, with music hall dancers and Parisian prostitutes modelling for the images.³ Some depict domestic boudoir scenes of sensuous discipline, spanking and whipping, while others are more strongly fetish-themed Domination and submissive scenes, with heavy chain used for bondage, and scenarios that posed mock threat to the woman, in a 'damsel-in-distress' scenario.

The Biederer images are beautifully composed, with theatrical

staging, costume fetish and erotic attire, such as leather, corsets, fully-fashioned seamed stockings, lingerie and boots. They catered well to the market for fetish erotica. In the late 1930s, the Biederers set up a publishing house named '*Éditions Ostra*', which produced albums of photo series sold in sets, including outdoor narrative photography, studio sets, erotic photography for book commissions and commercial work for Yva Richard's mail-order line of lingerie, fetish and bondage products. The Ostra Studio also produced a short film entitled *Dressage au fouet*, which featured a lingerie-clad woman whipping another lady,⁴ and early stag films.

A few of their photographs are identifiable from the monograph 'JB' (for Jacques Biederer) or 'B' (for Biederer), or feature the name 'Ostra' or a question mark inside a triangle. The vast majority of the Biederer and Ostra Studio fetish images were, however, unsigned, discernable only from their stylistic signature, as well as their familiar furniture, props and models.

There is a tragic end to their story reported – that the brothers, who were of Jewish descent, perished at Auschwitz. The Biederer/Ostra legacy, whose work was a large influence on fetish artists, including John Willie and Irving Klaw, was to live on long after their death. Thousands of the studios' images continue to circulate, and have been brought together in a wonderful French-published volume entitled *Les Éditions Ostra: L'âge d'Or du Fétichisme*.⁵ The images themselves have helped form and inform the fetish image of the 'Dominatrix' for the twentieth century.

The other part of the fetish Dominatrix image legacy derived from the French photos was 'Yva Richard', or rather L. Richard and his seamstress (and exhibitionist) wife Nativa. They evolved their business from selling lingerie and costumes, into the more lucrative trade of fetish clothing, photographic sets, bondage and discipline implements, and equipment. Ostra Studio produced their mail-order catalogues, and erotic fetish photography was also sold by Yva Richard.

The model for the photography and catalogue was Nativa herself, a full-figured woman, who would reportedly use pseudonyms such as

Miss Milado and Helios. She can be seen in numerous photographs for Yva Richard, posing in thigh-high stiletto-heeled leather boots, tight-laced corsets and full-length leather opera gloves (see **Figures 33 and 34**). She also adopted a studded cone bra and knickers made out of steel, and posed holding a riding crop. (More than a decade later, the American pin-up and fetish model Bettie Page would adopt a similar outfit in a photographic assignment for Irving Klaw.)





Figures 33 and 34 Model Nativa in photographs for Yva Richards, Paris (c. 1930s).

In Germany, a man named Hans Rehfeld operated openly in Berlin during 1930–32, and possibly ever earlier.⁶ His output is uncommon, and far less widely known than that of the French Biederer/Ostra images and those of Nativa for Yva Richard. The fetish images associated with him were, however, very innovative for their time.⁷

The European material made its way into the US, and into the hands of Charles Guyette, 'the G-String King', who ran a store at 116 East 11th Street in New York City. As well as selling products through his store, Guyette ran a mail-order business, which advertised in *London Life* around 1934–35.

Photographs — Collectors: We have costume studies of all kinds. Lingerie, corsets, high heels, etc. Female boxers and wrestlers in action. Also other types.⁸







Figures 35, 36 and 37 Models in pony play for Charles Guyette, New York (c. 1940s).

‘Also other types’ was an in-reference to fetishistic material, understood by those in the know. Amongst the work that Guyette produced was a set of ‘pony-play’ images with a modified baby carriage creatively converted into a cart, and the dominant woman wearing a modified usherette uniform and shown bridling a pony-girl (see **Figures 35–37**). Other photographs depicted scenes of female domination over male models, such as riding a man in high-heel boots (see **Figure 38**), and another depicting a domestic scene of foot worship (see **Figure 39**).





Figure 38 and 39 Vintage images of couple modelling for Charles Guyette, New York.

There are little 'hard facts' to draw from on Guyette's operations or life, but he was regarded as one of the central figures of the underground fetish circles in the US. He is even said to have run an

invitation-only private club, referred to as the ‘American Social Circle’, made up of underground fetish enthusiasts.⁹ Like the Monks of Medmenham or Hellfire Club in England, it is difficult to testify historically to rumour and reality surrounding the club, regarding its activities or membership. In August 1935, however, Guyette was caught up on charges for sending lewd publications and material through the US Postal Service, and reportedly sent to jail for one year and one day.¹⁰

The cumulative impact of the circa 1930s fetish material, of Biederer/Ostra Studio, Yva Richard, Hans Rehfeld and Charles Guyette, was the creation of a fetish style – a legacy that exists up until this day.

Although their names remain relatively obscure, the fetish magazines and illustrators who were to follow in America are very well known. These include John Willie (the pseudonym of John Alexander Scott Coutts) of *Bizarre* magazine (1946–59). Willie was responsible for creating the fabulous damsel-in-distress, ‘Sweet Gwendoline’, and the secret agent in Dominatrix role, named U69.¹¹ Much of Willie’s artwork features a woman dominating another woman, who is typically tied-up or restrained, and often gagged (see **Figure 40**).



Figure 40 A 'bizarre' style lady with whip, by John Willie (J. S. Coutts). Watercolour and gouache (c. 1962).

Leonard 'Lenny' Burtman was behind *Exotique* magazine (1955–59),¹² which featured photographs of models Tana Louise, in Dominatrix role, and none other than Bettie Page. Artwork was contributed by Eric Stanton and Gene Bilbrew, who also went by the pseudonym ENEG, which was Gene's name spelt backwards. They also used pseudonyms Bondy and van Rod in the 1950s.¹³ Other magazine titles by Burtman followed. Another prominent name was, of course, the photography producer and publisher, Irving Klaw.

Together, these characters co-created the modern Dominatrix image and the 'bizarre' (as it came to be referred to) aesthetic. For whereas

in the nineteenth century the female flagellants Governess Dominatrices wore fashionable clothing and costumes, and met requests of individual clients for fetishes such as fur, long gloves, lace lingerie and so on; the twentieth century saw the Dominatrix donning the 'bizarre' attire to create her look and identifiable role. The new wardrobe of the Dominatrix was leather corsets, thigh-high leather boots, leather gloves and high-heel stilettos. As latex/rubber became a new material used for clothing, this, too, was fast added to 'Her' visual vernacular.

Naming the Dominatrix: Adoption of a title to their craft occupation

The term 'Dominatrix' itself was only applied to the occupation in the late 1960s, in a context of pulp paperbacks on the 'bizarre sex' underground, and was popularised in film.

One of the first of these pulp paperbacks was Michael Leigh's paperback book, *The Velvet Underground* (1963), which explored the subculture of underground 'bizarre sex' activities, in a mock-shock journalistic style (see **Figure 42**).¹⁴ The book inspired the name of the American band *The Velvet Underground*, whose members included Lou Reed. Reed wrote the song 'Venus in Furs' referencing Leopold van Sacher-Masoch's 1870 novella *Venus in Furs*. The song's lyrics were about a Mistress and slave relationship, and made reference to the worship of leather boots and to whipping.

Shiny, shiny, shiny boots of leather
Whiplash girl-child in the dark
Comes in bells, your servant don't forsake him
Strike dear Mistress, and cure his heart.¹⁵



Figure 41 Display at Back Date Magazine Store, 1175 Sixth Avenue, NYC (September 1958).

The term 'Dominatrix' itself was seemingly first coined in Bruce Rogers' pulp paperback *The Bizarre Lovemakers*, published in 1967 (see **Figure 43**). It describes a case example of a woman who provides punishment-for-pay as a 'Dominatrix'.¹⁶ Shortly after Rogers' book came Myron Kosloff's publication *Dominatrix* (with art by Eric Stanton) in 1968 (see **Figure 44**). It was through these publications that the term 'Dominatrix' came to be applied to the profession.



Figure 42 Martin Leigh, *The Velvet Underground* (1963).

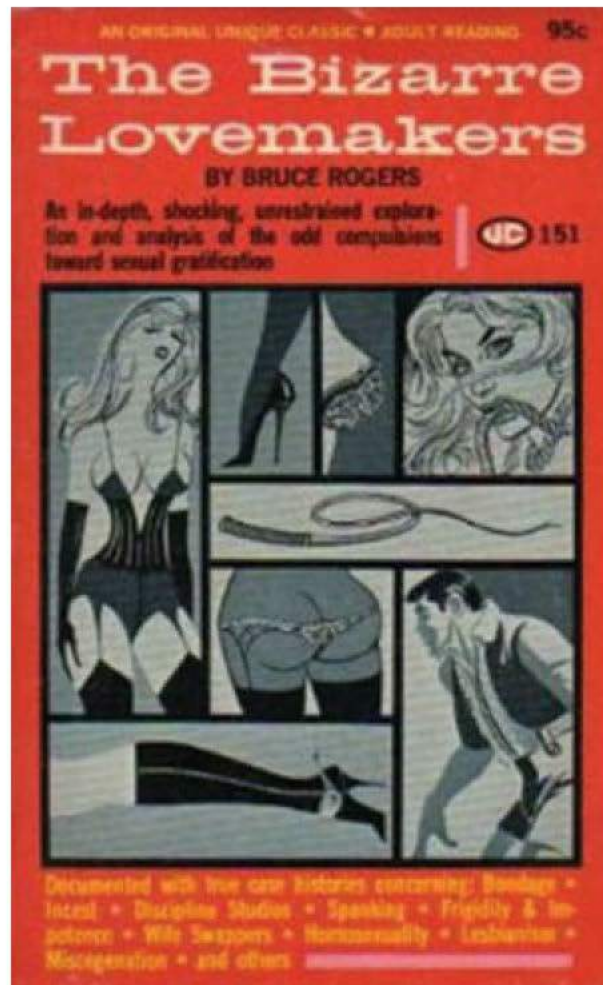


Figure 43 Bruce Rogers, *The Bizarre Lovemakers* (1967).



Figure 44 Myron Kosloff, *Dominatrix* (1968).

The ‘Dominatrix’ entered more popular mainstream knowledge following the 1976 film, *Dominatrix Without Mercy*. The film followed the story of a female model who, after responding to an advertisement offering lucrative money, came to take the role of playing Dominatrix in a New York parlour.

Around the same time, the French film *Maîtresse* was also released (1975–76). Filmed in Paris, it was directed by Barbet Schroeder and starred a young Gérard Depardieu and Bulle Ogier. (Legendary UK artist Allen Jones designed the film’s promotion poster [see **Figure 45**].) The film followed the story of a man’s relationship with a professional Dominatrix. The strongly authentic flavour was provided by an on-set real-life Dominatrix acting as consultant. Her slaves were

reportedly those who appeared within the film's scenes, and she is said to have performed the scene in which nails were hammered through the skin of a slave's genitals. (The lead actress, Bulle Ogier, was off-set and reportedly not aware of the scene until she saw it in the film.)

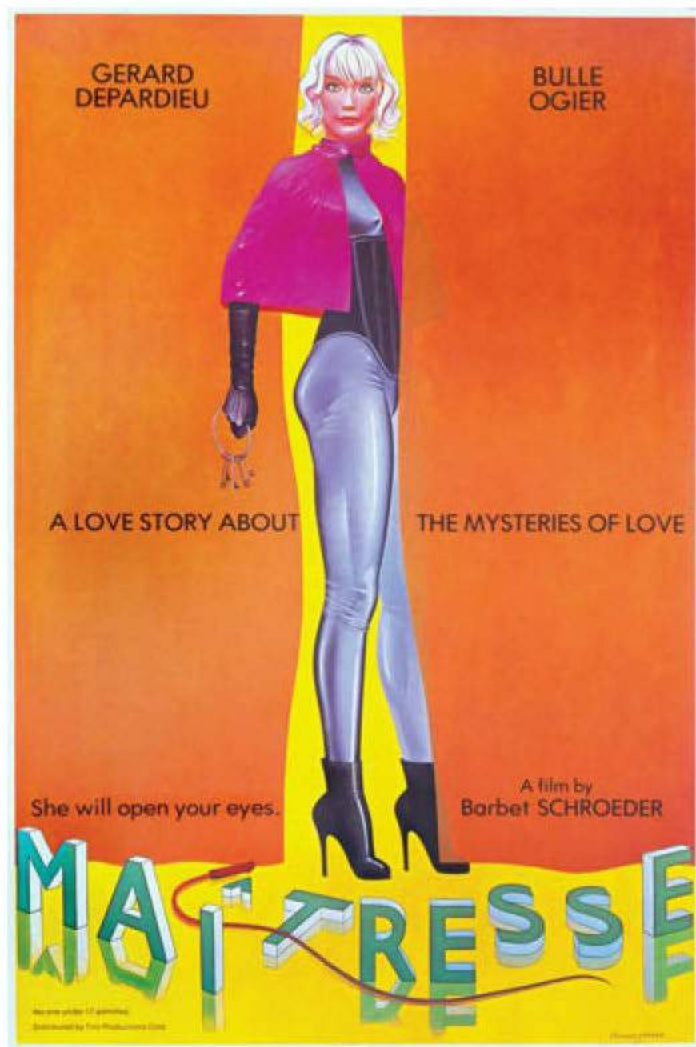


Figure 45 *Maîtresse* film poster (1975–76). Designed by British artist Allen Jones. Collection of Reel Poster Gallery.

Snapshots of Real-Life Twentieth-Century Dominatrices: In time, space and place

There are a few photographs that still exist of the discreet women

who ran their domination businesses in London, New York, The Hague and Herbertstrasse during the mid-twentieth century. These women came into contact with magazine editors and fetish clothing designers, and were at some point photographed.

The early images of the 1950s and 1960s are predominantly black-and-white or sepia, up until the advent of colour film and polaroids, after which time there are faded photographs and scans from magazine articles, copied and re-copied, which still survive. The resulting record is fragmentary, incomplete and non-linear in chronological time. However, what it does do is provide us with 'snapshots' of Dominatrices in time, space and place. Paired with second-hand accounts of those who once knew them, we have a small peephole into how these women operated in their era and geographical location, in a subversive career of female domination.

1960s England: Miss Doreen of London and Miss Anne of Kent

England in the 1960s was still very conservative when it came to professional domination. Much of the information of the Dominatrices from this era comes second-hand from accounts of John Sutcliffe (of *AtomAge* magazine) and other magazine editors he knew. Sutcliffe was in a privileged position to know about Dominatrices of the 1960s era, as he was the main fashion designer of 'bizarre attire' to whom Dominatrices would go to for their custom-made clothing.

Sutcliffe was a former aircraft engineer with an 'attachment' to leather, diagnosed as a mental illness in the era in which fetishes were regarded as a psychiatric disorder, with attempts made to 'cure' him.¹⁷ He subsequently suffered a marital and mental breakdown, moving out of his house with little money to his name, and became a wedding photographer to make ends meet. He was also a keen motorcyclist, and the story goes that he took a lady friend on his motorcycle, when the heavens opened, leaving her soaked wet. So they went searching for motorcycle leathers prior to the next outing. Unable to find anything suitable for women, Sutcliffe reportedly

purchased a dozen skins of red leather from Soho, and made her an outfit himself on a sewing machine he borrowed from his landlady.¹⁸ The resulting red motorcycling leathers, with a wide belt and large press studs, apparently delighted the lady for whom they had been made. When another friend saw the unique creation, she too wanted a custom leather outfit, and so was born the idea for a new company registered as ‘a manufacturer of waterproofs for lady pillion riders.’¹⁹ He had hit on a niche market, creating motorcycle leathers for women (including female rally drivers), as well as making form-fitting catsuits and bizarre fetish pieces for private individuals in leather and PVC.

Sutcliffe’s creations are said to have influenced Jim Bates’ design of the catsuit worn by Emma Peel’s character (played by Diana Rigg) on the television show *The Avengers*, which may have even been made in Sutcliffe’s workshop.²⁰ As for Sutcliffe’s own design work – he undertook costumes for the stage version of *The Avengers* and designed the all-in-one leather outfit for Marianne Faithful’s role in *The Girl on a Motorcycle* (1968).²¹

Sutcliffe’s designs were popular with wealthy clients who were enthusiasts of bizarre fetish attire and, of course, the Dominatrices of the era. One of the most sought-after discipline ladies, according to Sutcliffe, was Miss Doreen. He personally visited her at her West End flat that had a bespoke dungeon room (which Sutcliffe thought was amazing for its time).

According to Sutcliffe, Miss Doreen’s room was specially soundproofed for discretion, and housed a padded pillory, whipping bench and a bondage chair, upholstered with sharp spikes.²² She also had an impressive collection of whips, alongside her other pieces of discipline and punishment equipment.



Figure 46 Miss Doreen (aka Miss Anne, Miss Anita, Miss Tracey), London (1960s).

Miss Doreen had more names than a secret service agent. Depending on where and how she advertised, she was also Miss Anne,

Miss Anita and Miss Tracey (see **Figures 46–48**).²³ By reputation, her clients included some of Britain's top politicians and businessmen. Indeed Sutcliffe would receive a number of Miss Doreen's prominent clients at his workshop, to be outfitted in a rubber French maid outfit or all-in-one bizarre leather attire. These prestigious gentlemen would reportedly talk rather excitedly to Sutcliffe about Miss Doreen while they were being measured up for their new outfit.²⁴





Figures 47 and 48 Miss Doreen in her West End flat, London (1960s).

Miss Doreen's apprentice was Nadine Day, who testified to Miss Doreen's remarkable wardrobe collection of bizarre clothing in leather and vinyl, exotic attire for cross-dressers and transvestites, and an enormous collection of stiletto-heeled shoes and boots,

including large sizes for men's feet to fit her clients. She would take relish in teaching clients to walk in a lady-like fashion in the pencil-thin-stiletto heels.²⁵ One of the rare vintage photos of the era shows Miss Doreen cutting an attractive silhouette, hands on hips, gazing towards some of her shoe collection, while herself wearing a pair of killer stilettos.

She was reportedly 'pure Dominatrix' in her services, which never extended to sexual or escorting services. Described as 'all come on, but no-touchie-touchie', she was regarded as being a true craft Dominatrix, talented and professional, and very discreet.²⁶ She didn't share anything of her personal life with her clients, and reciprocally kept their discretion and privacy.

Miss Doreen closed her business down in the late 1960s, selling off her clothes and equipment to her apprentice Nadine Day, before disappearing off the scene. She had some kind of illness. Cancer was rumoured, but it is unknown exactly what ailment Miss Doreen suffered. She is believed to have died around 1973, and is remembered by those who knew her as one of the best Dominatrices who ever practiced, albeit unheard-of outside the underground circle of submissives, bondage and discipline and cross-dressing enthusiasts who knew her.

Another English Dominatrix who had connections to *AtomAge's* John Sutcliffe was Mistress Anne, who practiced in the underground fetish scene from around 1968. She lived on a semi-rural street in Kent, and was both a 'lifestyle' and semi-professional Dominatrix, dominating her husband in her personal life and also taking paid sessions with clients. Taking the dominant role in her relationship, she would have her husband sit passively in the passenger seat while she drove about Kent and direct him in servitude to her, making dinner and attending domestic duties.²⁷ He no doubt gratefully and excitedly enjoyed being erotically dominated by his tall and 'in-charge' wife.

An old rustic carriage house, serving as a garage on their property, was converted into a dungeon for Anne. Tall hedges screened the walkway between the homestead and the carriage house, providing

privacy for her husband and submissive clients to move between the two buildings in fetish attire.²⁸ The dungeon housed pieces of equipment, which included a St Andrew's Cross, a bondage horse, a stretching rack and a suspension system. Her collection of whips, crops, canes, cuffs and other SM and bondage devices was kept in a side cupboard. In Anne's specially soundproofed dungeon playspace, she received around two or three paying clients a week, fulfilling her own thirst to dominate and contributing towards the household expense bill. Submissive businessmen would hear about Anne through the underground of fetish and domination enthusiasts.

In around 1970, Mistress Anne's devoted submissive husband wanted to have a special fetish outfit made for his wife. They approached John Sutcliffe to undertake this task, and collaborated on the planned design. The resulting shiny wet-look, head-to-toe outfit, made *AtomAge* history. It was beautifully detailed with mock lacing, patent leather belt, wet-look gloves and a shiny hood with cat's eyes cut out. Anne was featured modelling the outfit in Issue 3 of *AtomAge*, resplendent in high-heel boots with spurs, elongating her already-tall frame (see **Figures 49–51**).²⁹ She was transformed completely, and became an icon of 'bizarre' style.



The first idea was a pair of side-laced trousers to be worn with a blouse and some rather exotic shoes. When it was completed Anne thought it might be nice to have a blouse of the same material as the trousers. This was accomplished by making up the design with seams lightly tacked together so that she could come along and try the sort of fit which would look best with the trousers.

When we had agreed on the fitting, Anne, who had many good ideas, thought it would be appropriate to have buckles on the shoulders and some mock lacing on the sleeves.

Next, Anne tried some patent leather boots just to get the effect. She tried them first with the trousers on the outside of the boots, but this was not very impressive. However, when the boots were worn over the trouser leg then the result was such that she immediately ordered a pair to fit and we did the pictures which have already been published.

Later, her husband thought that it might be nice to add a matching helmet, which was then constructed and fitted. The final touches to the whole outfit being added by a patent leather belt and wet-look gloves which can be obtained in most multiple stores. To sharpen up the whole design for these photographs, the work-room made up some large gauntlet cuffs which could be added by means of a strap and buckle at the wrist.

Anne in dominant mood.





Figures 49, 50 and 51 Mistress Anne of Kent, United Kingdom.

AtomAge magazine was inundated with fan mail for Mistress Anne, and Sutcliffe was fielding requests left, right and centre from people

wanting her contact details. He obliged as a favour to the Mistress. Fielding an incessant deluge of enquiries, however, Sutcliffe came up with the *AtomAge* 'Contact System', by which he enabled fetish enthusiasts to get in contact with each other discreetly.

1950s, New York and New Jersey: Anne Laurence, Jean Fischer and Monique von Cleef

The 1950s was the era of the housewife, and was a largely conservative environment. The congressional hearings on anti-Americanism and the 'Black List' had its effects on anyone who might be deemed 'subversive', who was connected to the entertainment industry or was involved with or knew people within the Communist Party. Editors of fetish magazines were at risk of prosecution or persecution under 'obscenity' laws. There was a real fear in the air, accounted for by those within the underground scene. Whether paranoid or not, it made many people guarded and careful about their dealings with a Dominatrix. There was quite a tight circle of people with shared interests in fetish and domination who socialised together at private parties.

Anne Laurence was a professional Dominatrix who was known within the New York circle. She operated very discreetly through the 1950s and early 1960s from a comfortable Uptown Manhattan apartment. Amongst her close friends were Bill Fischer and his Dominant wife Jean, of Ossining, who were good friends with fetish artist John Willie, acquaintances of Irving Klaw, Leonard 'Lennie' Burtman and Eric Stanton.³⁰ Everyone knew each other by only one or two degrees of separation, it would seem. Bill and Jean Fischer would visit Burtman's apartment, where Anne Laurence and Jean would 'Double-Domme' together, ganging up on slave clients for extra fun.³¹

Jean Fischer was not only close friends with John Willie, but also appears to have impacted Willie's image of the Dominatrix. In one beautifully rendered artwork, the Dominatrix wears Jean Fischer's very distinctive wide-sleeve gloves and shoulder-length brown hair

(see **Figures 52–54**). The rural setting is implied by the fencepost (to which the woman is tied), the jodhpurs and riding boots worn by the Dominatrix, such as Jean was known to wear at her semi-rural property in Ossining. Although Jean Fischer was a ‘lifestyle’ (rather than professional) Dominatrix, her skills and technique were of a professional level, and men who were dominated by Jean would buy her custom-made boots or bespoke hand-braided whips in gratitude as gifts.³²





Figures 52 and 53 Jean Fischer of Ossining, New York.



Figure 54 Artwork of Dominatrix with distinctive gloves resembling those worn by Jean Fischer, by John Willie (J.S Coutts). Watercolour & gouache (c. 1962).

Fischer and Laurence were very close, reportedly ‘as thick as thieves’ in their friendship, and would spend time together in New York. Laurence kept her Upper West Side apartment with an adjustable metal restriction table amongst other pieces of bondage furniture.³³ She had a selection of paddles and whips, and her wardrobe was equipped with a variety of bizarre attire, leather, gloves, corsets, high-heel fetish stilettos and boots.³⁴ Rather unusually for the era, Laurence even had a number of latex-rubber dresses, which were cutting-edge at that time, as rubber latex had only just started to be used for clothing. A few vintage photos of Laurence in her Manhattan apartment exist from this period, and a later

photograph of her standing with a cane (**Figures 55 and 56**).





Figures 55 and 56 Anne Laurence, Upper East Manhattan (c. 1960s).

In fact, untitled images of Laurence would circulate in magazines long after her retirement, which came sometime in the mid- to late-1960s. (She reportedly moved to Long Island due to frail health and personal problems.)³⁵ Magazines used her likeness to illustrate articles or mostly fictitious 'Readers Letters', which came from Laurence's own clients and had been taken with her blessing as a keepsake. Photographs filtered down into the hands of erotic

magazine publishers, who seldom had any idea who the model/Dominatrix was, and would use the photographs for illustrative purposes, almost any way they wanted and without concern for signed release forms. Photographs of Laurence appear in publications by Burmel Publishing, House of Milan and Jennifer Jordan titles without attribution.³⁶

Another Dominatrix in New York around this era was a pretty young blonde Dutch Dominatrix named Monique von Cleef, who arrived on the New York scene in the early 1960s. She came into domination from a background in nursing, which is a useful (and quite common) background occupation for Dominatrices, and was photographed for Leonard Burtman's magazine *Bizarre Life* in 1963. The images were shot in his Manhattan apartment, with Von Cleef wearing the same borrowed leather attire that would be worn by Tana Louise and other models in Burtman's magazines (see **Figure 57**).³⁷



Figure 57 Dutch Dominatrix Monique von Cleef in New York at Leonard 'Lenny' Burtman's apartment in Manhattan (c. 1963).

Von Cleef went on to set up in a large, 16-room house at 850 Lake Street in Newark, New Jersey, with professional playrooms equipped to receive her paying clients on the upper floor.

Just days before Christmas, Von Cleef would be spectacularly raided by police detectives acting in cahoots with the US Postal Service 'obscenity' division. The raid would make headlines all over the US, such as across the front page of the *Bakersfield Californian*, 'US HAMMERS RED INDUSTRY: Detectives Invade House of Horrors' (see Figure 58).³⁸



Figure 58 *Bakersfield Californian*, 22 December 1965, with article on police raid of Von Cleef.

Photographs of police detectives brandishing Von Cleef's whips ran in the articles, alongside images of Von Cleef herself. The police reportedly hauled off some two carloads of her whips, chains, leather cat o' nine tails, steel bracelets and leg irons. Von Cleef, although jailed, would later win her case in the Supreme Court a few years later, which found that the police had essentially abused their powers of search-and-seizure. The court cases make fascinating reading, highlighting the questionable activities in the police ferreting out 'furtive and ingenious activities', including those of 'lewdness' in private.

Ferret Detectives and 'Furtive Ingenious Activities' of 'Lewdness' in Private

The men who targeted Monique von Cleef were a joint force of the US Postal Service 'obscenity' division, working with the US law enforcement police detectives. In the state of New Jersey, 'acts of lewdness' were criminal, including those in private.

Detective Lieutenant Magnusson was part of a special investigation division that dealt with 'obscenity' in the day's definition. Their job was to ferret out pornography and material on sexual 'aberrations', as they regarded them, including homosexuality, transvestitism, voyeurism, sadism and masochism. Magnusson had reportedly been assigned to the obscenity division for eight years, and had participated in almost 600 'obscenity' investigations.³⁹

The investigation of Von Cleef was reportedly spurred by the publications *Flair* and *La Plume*, which were connected to James Beard, who Von Cleef worked with, and which bore her discreet advertisement:

N.Y.C – Exotic Miss, 30 years, 36-26-36. Extremely interested in rubberwear, satin, French lingerie, discipline, etc, ; Anxious to experiment. Will correspond with all. Write descriptively. Photo appreciated.⁴⁰

The advertisement was accompanied by a photograph of Von Cleef and the reference number 174 (used for discretion and privacy within

the mail contact system, for readers who wanted to make contact with others who shared their special [fetish] interests).

Laying a trap for Von Cleef, the postal and police team sent in Detective Magnusson as a pretend submissive client, who wrote to her requesting a paid consultation, making an appointment for an hour and a half of discipline.

The court testimony speaks to Von Cleef's empathy and sensitivity for those with fetish and submissive interests.⁴¹ She welcomes her guest, greeting him with his anonymous name as 'Mr S'. She takes his coat, pours him a drink, and helps to try and relax and open him up to her about his interests. When he won't share much with her, saying he had to be discreet, Von Cleef says, 'How can I help you if you won't tell me about yourself?' She asks him about his childhood and adolescence, and when he first started liking to be whipped. Detective Magnusson replied that he had an experience with a girl who he went out with and engaged in flagellation with, to a point where he would become sexually aroused, and would consummate the normal sex act. To which Von Cleef clarifies, 'Well I won't have intercourse with you'. She differentiated herself as a Dominatrix in her services, setting the boundaries of her role.⁴²

After discussing her personal background, her interest and experience in female domination, she handed the police detective a pair of women's high-heel shoes, and tells him that she wants him wearing them and kneeling in submission when she comes back in the room. 'I'm the boss', she reportedly said before leaving the room. She went on to adorn herself in black high-heel shoes, net stockings, and a 'tight-fitting rubber apparatus, which would resemble a bathing suit', according to Magnusson's report.⁴³

The police would bust into Von Cleef's house soon after, putting her under arrest. Although no search warrant had been issued, several policemen proceeded to search her entire house, of 16 rooms, for a period of about 3 hours.⁴⁴ Amongst their 'haul', the ferret detectives seized copies of *Flair* magazine, membership lists and member photographs, filing cabinets with thousands of private names and

addresses, 4,500 pieces of correspondence and private photographs of Von Cleef along with cartons of unopened mail.

On the third, upper floor of the house, the dungeon room, which she called 'The Tower', they seized seemingly everything but the chains attached to the ceiling. Von Cleef evidently had a terrific torture box – which drew particular police analysis and attention. She also had red rubber garments, chains, paddles, whips, straps, straightjackets, padded clothing, belts and restraint devices, and handcuffs, which would be entered into evidence. From a neighbouring small room, they seized rubber and leather garments. The various items would later be described and commented on in trial, with two psychiatrists testifying for each side.

As part of the Superior Court case, one of the most remarkable points made, of consequence to everyone's private acts, concerned a statute that delineated offences not only for public lewdness, but also private lewdness.

'Lewdness' was defined as 'the *irregular* indulgence of lust, whether public or private.' (*State v. Baledino*). It included acts committed in private with another person, which tended to 'debaunch the morals and manners of the people', even when no one else was witness to the act.⁴⁵ The Superior Court found against Von Cleef, for 'occupying a place for the purposes of lewdness and assignation', in which the inflicting or receiving of pain for sexual gratification was 'lewdness'.

Flair magazine's correspondence system for BDSM and fetish enthusiasts also came under court scrutiny, with far-reaching consequences for many people. Hundreds of people's names, those who sought to join the private Flair Club, had their application forms introduced before the court in the Von Cleef trial. A ringed notebook containing master files of names and addresses of correspondents from various states, sometimes accompanied by photographs, was also entered into evidence.⁴⁶ These were names of otherwise ordinary Americans, who enjoyed Domination and fetish in their private lives, revealed in court. Private letters addressed to 'Mistress Monique' were introduced as evidence, written by 'slave' men, who wrote declarations of wishing to do anything their Mistress or Queen

desired.

One can only imagine the emotions of all the people affected by Von Cleef's court case, who had written to her with their most private desires, or to others in private via the *Flair* correspondence system. Seeking people who shared or understood their interests and understood them, they found their private correspondence used as evidence in a court trial. Their private passions were essentially damned (and slammed) as being 'lewd', 'sexual aberrations', and as 'deviant'.⁴⁷ Publications dealing with fetish or sadomasochistic activity were similarly deemed 'obscene'. (E. L. James' *Fifty Shades of Grey* would have garnered her big trouble had it been published in the 1960s!)

Von Cleef, who was jailed for her 'crimes', would later say of the raid that she was herself a 'typical Aquarius, and they are always fifty years ahead of their time'.⁴⁸ History, as it turned out, would prove her correct. Partial redemption was in even closer sight, with Von Cleef winning the Supreme Court case in 1969, which found the police search-and-seizure unlawful. And, by around this era, Von Cleef had zipped out of the US and set up in the Netherlands, in The Hague.

The Hague, 1970s: Monique von Cleef, Sadom Bea and Mistress Kenny

Amsterdam had the reputation as one of the most sexually permissive cities in the world, but it was The Hague that was known for Dominatrices. It was full of Von Cleef's ideal clients: lawyers, ambassadors, diplomats and politicians. As Mistress Michelle Peters recounts:

She [Von Cleef] said she met slaves of all types and all sorts, but wouldn't discuss who they were, especially the Americans. But she did say the Hague was full of politicians and because they were so nearby and the embassies and so ... Then stopped, I guess that answered the question.⁴⁹

Monique von Cleef's Dutch 'House of Pain' was set up in a lovely

house on Laan van Meerdervoort. The location was just North of Den Haag's Central station, and a short way down the same road from the Peace Palace.⁵⁰ The set-up was described by Peters:

The house itself is like most others on the street, a whitewashed, four-storey stone building. The first floor includes her living quarters and a reception area where she interviews new slaves. The second storey is devoted almost completely to a dungeon and it is filled with the tools of her trade. The third floor is off limits, but I can tell you, it's her boudoir. The fourth floor and final floor was used for storage, now converted into another dungeon, complete with a jacuzzi. And at any given time you will see slaves busy cleaning house, serving guests, providing excellent domestic help.⁵¹

Von Cleef was keen to capitalise on her fame, and worked on a biography of her life with Lyle Stewart, which was published in 1973 out of Syracuse, New York, entitled *The House of Pain: The Strange World of Monique Von Cleef, The Queen of Humiliation: An Autobiography and a Message to All Human Slaves*.⁵² It was the first legitimate book to be published about a Dominatrix within the English-speaking world. As a result of the publicity and her earlier North American court cases, Von Cleef became a celebrity Dominatrix. Devoted slaves flocked to her from around the world, and fledgling Dominatrices who wished to apprentice under her, put in their time at the 'House of Pain'.⁵³ The house had a reputation for accommodating heavy masochistic sessions, humiliation sessions (for which Von Cleef was renowned), cross-dressing, medical-themed BDSM scenarios and fetishes. An actual real-life castration was also rumoured to have been performed on a slave who had long desired to be a serving eunuch.⁵⁴



Monique von Clef



Figures 59 and 60 Monique Von Cleef in her 'House of Pain', The Hague (1970s).

There is a personally autographed Polaroid of Von Cleef from this era, given to David Jackson, and another, an early colour photograph, which show something of the rooms in her 'House of Pain' during the 1970s (see **Figures 59 and 60**). Von Cleef would reportedly remain in the same location until the mid-1980s.⁵⁵

Some of the other names in The Hague were Indonesian Dominatrices Sadom Bea and Mistress Kenny. Bea had begun her career in Amsterdam's 'Club Samas' in 1968 as their main House Mistress (appearing in its A5-sized *Club Samas* magazine), and moved to The Hague in the 1970s after the club's closure. Bea worked with another Indonesian Mistress named Mistress Kenny at a private flat on Columbraast, as well as at Von Cleef's 'House of Pain'. In 1973,

however, Bea moved to another new bondage establishment set up by Dominatrix Mistress Jenny, 'The Eros Centre', and at the same time altered her name from 'Bea' to 'Sadom Bea'. She was photographed in front of her St Andrew's Cross (see **Figure 61**).⁵⁶ Bea was kept very busy by the proximity of the World Court and the city's reputation for international diplomatic conferences. With her ready whip, she punished her politician and policy-making clients to rid them of their guilt, stress and for their indiscretions.⁵⁷



Figure 61 Sadom Bea, The Hague (c. 1970s).

Her colleague, Mistress Kenny, had a flat on Columbraast from which she worked mostly during the evenings and weekends, while simultaneously juggling a daytime career in the ‘normal’ world.⁵⁸ Mistress Kenny’s background was in the field of medicine and clinical care, not dissimilar from Von Cleef’s background in nursing. It is no surprise to hear that the Columbraast flat was kept clinically clean. It was also reportedly well equipped for its era, but basic by today’s standards (according to a magazine editor who visited her there).⁵⁹

After years of sharing a space, Mistress Kenny moved to Rotterdam in the early 1980s, and set up her own one-room playspace. It had faux red-brick finish on the three walls, and aluminium foil on a fourth, with a large, old-fashioned wagon wheel secured to the wall, and a heavy wooden bondage cross. Racks of paddles, canes, crops, bit gags, straps, cuffs and hoods were set up, reflecting Mistress Kenny’s interests. She reportedly had a creative imagination for making the most out of her space and equipment with her Dominatrix skills. She was featured on the cover of *DDI* magazine in this space, wearing space age-looking silver boots and clothing, and a cat’s eye mask for anonymity (see **Figure 62**).



Figure 62 Miss Kenny, The Hague (c. 1970s) on the cover of *DDI* magazine.

Mistress Kenny returned to The Hague in 1990, setting up rather more opulently in the seaside resort suburb of Scheveningen. She set up her space with soft grey walls and black rubber flooring, hung with mirrors and beautiful, custom-made bondage furniture upholstered in black leather. This included a padded St Andrew's Cross, convertible throne chair and bondage chair, a bondage bench and whipping bench. Her equipment, acquired over two decades of domination, was impressive, and reflected her long-term commitment to her craft profession.⁶⁰

Hamburg, 1970-80s: Brita Schmerse, Mistress Gaby, Nicole de Carje

In the St Pauli district of Hamburg in Germany, Dominatrices have long taken up window positions on the famous cobblestone red-light strip of Herbertstrasse (*Herbertstraße*). The street still exists in the same function to this day, divided off by a large screen, carrying a message prohibiting young people from entering the strip.

In the era of the late 1970s, a Dominatrix named Brita Schmerse had prime position on the Herbertstrasse. Working from the first window in the first house, just after the barrier entrance, Schmerse worked the night shift, while her colleague, Red Lola, took the day shift. Schmerse's role as Dominatrix was visually (and symbolically) differentiated from surrounding prostitutes by her distinctive attire. Whereas neighbouring windows feature women in skimpy lingerie and bikini pieces, Schmerse would be dressed in black leather or black and red rubber (depending on her mood), paired with front-lacing thigh-high boots, and a dangerous-looking whip.⁶¹ 'Zey are gut for ze business' (they are good for business), she would say, with a glint in her eye.⁶² Her equipment helped perform the role of theatrical prop, symbolising the 'play' on offer.

Although a half-dozen Dominatrices would work on the Herbertstrasse, with a competitiveness and pecking order that goes with the territory, Schmerse was apparently the alpha Domina of her day. She had all the confidence, experience, attire and aloofness for the role. A few black-and-white photographs of her at work survive, depicting Schmerse 'in action' with a slavegirl (see **Figure 63**).



Figure 63 Britta Schmerse, Herbertstrasse, Germany (c. late 1970s).

At number 28 on Herbertstrasse, around 1980, was a Dominatrix named Mistress Gaby, who excelled at communicating visual dominance through crafted self-image. She reportedly managed to achieve an expression of coldness, combined with a look of disdain, which signalled her superiority over any passing submissive man (see **Figure 64**). In an operation that overturns the woman as passive-watched, and man as active-watcher, Mistress Gaby did not flirtatiously or provocatively engage, but rather communicated the dare of danger. A submissive man would have to take up the challenge, to step into the claustrophobic lair of this dominant woman, and submit to her will and whip, to be at her feet worshiping her thigh-high leather boots, and work to gain her interest and respect. All this was communicated in her cold, severe look. For those who did venture inside, she had an excellent reputation as a talented

Dominatrix. Her upstairs dungeon was black, with a mirror on one side, and walls set up with hoods, straightjackets, arm-binders, whips and a good range of equipment in consideration of the tight quarters.



Figure 64 Mistress Gaby, Herbertstrasse, Germany (c. 1980).

The windows of European red-light strips had their advantages and disadvantages. Streets like the Herbertstrasse benefit from a flow of prospective customers, helping ensure a Dominatrix receives good business. The room format, however, means her space would typically be very small in comparison to the professional private chambers of other Dominatrices. Sized to fit a bed, rather than well planned to

accommodate a Dominatrix's equipment, it would require strategic placement to accommodate items like a whipping cross, bondage platform and a bend-over punishment bench within the flats of the Herbertstrasse. Often equipment would be multi-functional and versatile, with a smaller number of whips and implements of good quality. A Dominatrix in this environment had to work her space well to ensure it didn't cramp her style – quite literally. (The expression goes, 'it's barely enough room to swing a cat – o' nine tails'.)

It may have been the confines of a small space and sharing with other Dominatrices across shifts that led Mistress Gaby to move to a new, larger location on Stressemanstrasse around 1982. However, she reportedly returned to the Herbertstrasse a few years later, in 1984, but left a year or two later, selling up her equipment to another Dominatrix, and disappearing.

The windows offered Dominatrices relative freedom and transience to enter and exit the industry, with equipment readily shared or passed-on. Unlike the investment and commitment required by a private flat set-up with extensive equipment, the Herbertstrasse allowed women to dip in and out of domination.

One such Dominatrix who appeared and disappeared, perhaps to aid her university studies until a particular point in time, was Nicole de Carje. She was strikingly attractive, and would wear a long wig, with strong make-up and a leather cat's mask disguise (see **Figure 65**). In 1982 she was located at the first house on the Herbertstrasse, in its third window.⁶³ A prime position, any man entering around the barrier would be struck first by her eyes, looking out from her mask. Dressed in tight leather, with shiny black leather boots, arm gauntlets, with a whip draped over her stool, on view and yet hidden, she achieved the perfect Dominatrix effect – of concealing and revealing.

De Carje's room was accented with red. She had a versatile bondage table, operating dual purpose as a stretching rack, as well as a whipping bench and St Andrew's Cross. Her small equipment included whips, paddles, bondage cuffs, enema gear and rubber aprons, and she reportedly only worked a few nights a week, here and

there, while attending university. She disappeared from view around 1984. The Herbertstrasse had provided De Carje, for a brief period, the ability to flexibly work in domination, earn money for her studies, and disappear or move on anonymously when she wished.



Figure 65 Nicole de Carje, Herbertstrasse, Germany (c. 1982).

From around the 1980s onwards, Dominatrices' images and histories become much more visible, as a result of the myriad fetish magazines that came out. This enabled Dominatrices to more readily promote themselves to their niche market.

The snapshots of Dominatrices working in different regions during the twentieth century provide an insight into how women took up the subversive career choice during this era. Whether operating from a

discreet private flat, from a shared space, or from a red-light window, the ‘picture’ that emerges from behind their faded images and story fragments is one of self-determination.

The occupation of the Dominatrix involves an investment; in financial terms, in training and skill acquisition, and in weighing up the risks and stigma that may come about from operating a business in fetish and BDSM, in consideration of their own values and belief systems. For the conservative context of the 1950s, 1960s and even later, it was a brave and bold career choice.

Whereas ‘sex work’ was often framed in broad terms as inherently exploitive, connected to dialogues of human trafficking, drug-taking, gang and mob cartels, and control, the stories of Dominatrices provide a far more complex picture of women in sex work.

Women in the mid-twentieth century carved out a career and a craft for themselves, in their choice of professional domination. Not only were they Mistresses in fantasy role-play, but Mistresses of their own lives and careers, at a time in which their choice of occupation was considerably taboo.

It is also noteworthy that the twentieth-century Dominatrices were both formed by – and helped *inform* – the ‘bizarre’ fetish style. Although their attire was influenced by the photographic and magazine images of the dominant woman in ‘bizarre’ style, they also influenced the emerging style in various ways. Anne Laurence’s commission of a head-to-toe outfit (in which she was actively involved in the design process with John Sutcliffe of *AtomAge*) saw her co-create herself as an icon of ‘bizarre’ fetish fashion. Or in the case of Jean Fischer, whose distinctive gloves, style and attitude appear to have influenced one of John Willie’s own images on the Dominatrix. Fantasy informed reality, and reality in turn informed (and fed) fantasy. The bizarre underground that the Dominatrices inhabited and lived would impact the music industry, the fashion industry and erotic imagery forever onwards.

Endnotes

1 Henri, E. J. *Kiss of the Whip* (London: The Walton Press, 1961),

p. 136.

2 Ibid.

3 Dupuoy, A. *Les Éditions Ostra: L'âge d'Or du Fétichisme* (Éditions Astarte Publishing); See: <http://www.editionsastarte.com>, 2007.

4 See Biederer Brothers short film under Ostra, entitled *Dressage Au Fouet* on Archive.org website
(<http://archive.org/details/1930sFrenchFetishStagFilmSmWhipping>

5 Dupuoy, A. *Les Éditions Ostra: L'âge d'Or du Fétichisme*.

6 With great thanks to J. B. Rund of Belier Press in the US, for assisting with this information.

7 From email correspondence with Mr J. B. Rund of Béliér Press, 14 August 2013.

8 See 'Charles Guyette' at Spanking Art website
(http://spankingart.org/wiki/Charles_Guyette).

9 Ibid.

10 Ibid.

11 *Bizarre Magazine* was published between 1946–59, with issue 2 being the first issue released. The Dominatrix of 'Sweet Gwendoline', U69, has her name censored to U89 in some versions. A very good book is Belier Press' publication, *The Adventures of Sweet Gwendoline* by John Willie, which provides an accurate account of John Willie by J. B. Rund, and sets straight much of the incorrect information that circulates on the internet, as well as reproducing the relevant artwork to a high standard. There is also a Taschen publication: Kroll, E. (ed.) *The Complete Reprint of John Willie's Bizarre* (2 volumes) (Cologne: Taschen Books), which reproduces *Bizarre Magazine* issues in 'almost' complete form, and helps make these out-of-print issues available to all. (See the perfectionist J. B. Rund's critical review of its few errors at: <http://www.belierpress.com/www/review.html>)

12 See *The Complete Reprint of Exotique: The First 36 issues, 1951–1957* (3 volumes) (Cologne: Taschen Books).

- 13 From email correspondence with Mr J. B. Rund of Bélier Press, 14 August 2013.
- 14 Leigh, M. *The Velvet Underground* (USA, 1963). The book was republished in England as Leigh, M. *The Velvet Underground Revisited* (1967), and a year later re-released under the title *Bizarre Sex Underground* (1968).
- 15 Lyrics from 'Venus in Furs' song, by Lou Reed, for The Velvet Underground (band).
- 16 Rogers, B. *Bizarre Lovemakers* (New York, 1967), cited in *Oxford English Dictionary* under 'Dominatrix'. It is unclear whether this is definitively the first use of the term 'Dominatrix', as there are hundreds of underground publications that are unsearchable through in-library resources. However, by examining newspaper terms for 'Dominatrix', frequent use of the word occurs only after 1967, increasing after the film release of *Dominatrix Without Mercy*.
- 17 Trunk, J. 'The Rubber Man: The History of John Sutcliffe and Atomage[, *Dressing For Pleasure: The Best of AtomAge 1972–1980* (eds Murray, D. and Sorrell, S.) (London, UK: Fuel Books, 2010), p. 7.
- 18 Ibid.
- 19 Ibid.
- 20 Ibid.
- 21 Hodgkinson, H. 'King of Kinky', *The Guardian*, 11 September 2010, (<http://www.theguardian.com/theguardian/2010/sep/11/john-sutcliffe-fetish-wear>).
- 22 Jackson, D. 'Miss Doreen' in 'The Domina Files', *Domination Directory International Magazine*, p. 88.
- 23 Ibid.
- 24 Ibid.
- 25 Ibid.
- 26 Ibid.
- 27 Mistress Anne in Jackson, D. 'The Domina Files', *Domination*

Directory International Magazine, pp.144–45.

28 Ibid.

29 Sutcliffe, J. *AtomAge* magazine (Volume 3) (London, UK, 1970).

30 Jackson, D. 'Jean Fischer: John Willie's Favourite Dominatrix' in 'The Domina Files', *Domination Directory International Magazine*, pp. 60–61.

31 Ibid.

32 Jackson, D. 'Jean Fischer' in 'The Domina Files', *Domination Directory International Magazine*, pp. 60–61

33 Jackson, D. 'Anne Laurence' in 'The Domina Files', *Domination Directory International Magazine*, p. 93.

34 Ibid.

35 Ibid.

36 Ibid.

37 Jackson, D. 'Monique von Cleef' in 'The Domina Files', *Domination Directory International Magazine*, pp. 18–19, 112–13. (See page 19.)

38 *Bakersfield Californian*, 22 December 1965; some of the other newspapers across the US that carried the story on Wednesday, 22 December were: 'Torture For Thrills Set-Up Uncovered', *Capital Times* (Madison, Wisconsin); 'SADISM FOR SALE: Torture-Thrill House Raided', *The Morgantown Post* (West Virginia); 'Bizarre Torture-for-Thrills Den Uncovered: Many Sex Sadism Customers Said Well-Known Clients', *Brownsville Herald* (Texas). Other articles ran in: *The Daily Courier* (Connellsville, Pennsylvania); *The Berkshire Eagle* (Pittsburg, Massachusetts); *Raleigh Register* Beckley (West Virginia); *The Independent* (Pasadena, California); 'House of Torture Raided', *Daily Review* (Hayward, California); *News Journal* (Mansfield, Ohio); *El Paso Herald Post* (El Paso, Texas); *Sandusky Register* (Sandusky, Ohio); 'Torture for Thrills Operation Uncovered', *The Daily Interlake* (Kalispell, Montana); 'Nationwide Torture-for-Thrills Operation Uncovered in Mansion', *The Port Arthur News* Port Arthur (Texas); *Kingsport Times* (Kingsport,

Tennessee); *Oakland Tribune* (Oakland, California), and so on.

39 *State v. Von Cleef, Et Al.*, Case 102 N.J. Super. 102 (1968) 245 A.2d 495, *State of New Jersey v. Monique von Cleef and James Albert Beard*, Superior Court of New Jersey, Appellate Division. Argued 27 May 1968; decided 2 July 1968.

40 Ibid.

41 Ibid.

42 Ibid

43 Ibid.

44 *Monique von Cleef v. New Jersey* (1969), 395 U.S 814 (89 S.Ct. 2051, 23 L.Ed.2d 728), *Monique von Cleef v. New Jersey*, No 837. Decided 23 June 1969.

45 *State v. von Cleef, Et Al.* Case 102 N.J. Super.102 (1968) 245 A.2d 495, *State of New Jersey v Monique von Cleef and James Albert Beard*, Superior Court of New Jersey, Appellate Division. Argued 27 May 1968; decided 2 July 1968.

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<http://content.worldgroups.com/groups/Custom/M/MMPLibrary/r>

NB: This quote may also have appeared in Monique von Cleef’s Autobiography: Von Cleef, M. *The House of Pain: The Strange World of Monique Von Cleef The Queen of Humiliation: An Autobiography and Message to All Human Slaves* (New York: Lyle Stewart, 1973).

49 Mistress Michelle Peters, ‘Monique von Cleef 1925–2005’.

50 Jackson, D. ‘Monique von Cleef’, ‘The Domina Files’, *DDI*, pp. 18–19, 112–13 (see p. 112).

51 Mistress Michelle Peters, ‘Monique von Cleef 1925–2005’.

52 Von Cleef, M. *The House of Pain: The Strange World of Monique Von Cleef The Queen of Humiliation: An Autobiography and Message to All Human Slaves*.

- 53 Jackson, D. 'Monique von Cleef', 'The Domina Files', *DDI*.
- 54 Anonymous sources, and see also: David Jackson article on Von Cleef. Op. cit.
- 55 Von Cleef reportedly gave up her House of Pain to retire, however, as Jackson notes, she went on to bounce around in locales including Holland, Belgium, German and the USA in the 1990s, moving to Ostende on the Belgian coast around 1998, and later to Dusseldorf with a colleague named Lady Jane (ibid.). She passed away on 4 February 2005 in Antwerpe from complications associated with diabetes. See Bert Wibo's obituary 'Goodbye Monique von Cleef' at:
<http://content.worldgroups.com/groups/Custom/M/MMPLibrary/r>
- 56 She reportedly died in hospital of cancer in 1990. Ibid.
- 57 Jackson, D. 'Sadom Bea', 'The Domina Files', *DDI*, p. 93.
- 58 Jackson, D. 'Mistress Kenny', 'The Domina Files', *DDI*, pp. 28–29.
- 59 Ibid.
- 60 Entry was via a side door, down some stairs, to reach Mistress Kenny's reception and dungeon room. Here she would remain until 1997, retiring from the business for personal reasons after a long career in domination, and selling her equipment to colleagues, but retaining some of her wardrobe and small pieces for her own collection (ibid.).
- 61 Jackson, D. 'Britta Schmerse', 'The Domina Files', *DDI*, p. 39.
- 62 Ibid.
- 63 Jackson, D. 'Nicole de Carje', 'The Domina Files', *DDI*, p. 87.

Chapter IV

The Contemporary Occupation and Arts of the Dominatrix

Taking a Taboo for a Walk

One of the most significant artists working internationally on the subject of kink and the Dominatrix is Brooklyn, New York-based photographer Natasha Gornik. She describes herself as a ‘professional Experienter’.¹ She participates in the scenes she captures, eschewing the traditional position of the photographer as objective and removed. Her work is highly personal and engaged, and Gornik blogs about her experiences in ‘a diaristic mix of my words and photography which are about food, fuck and a couple of things in between.’

An important body of images came about when Gornik arranged to participate in photographing New York Dominatrix, Mistress Alex, as she took her slave out to Times Square. What came out of that shoot was not only taking the slave out for a walk, but taking a taboo for a walk. For while fetish and BDSM activities have achieved more mainstream acceptance and visibility in recent years, as fashion has found influence from the vernacular (language) of the Dominatrix, the blatant presentation of Her attire – in role, within a public setting – remains a taboo. The resulting images from Gornik’s body of work reveal the reactions of everyday New Yorkers whose path Mistress Alex, slave and photographer cross, as they journey through the underground tube to Times Square in the middle of downtown Manhattan (see **Figures 66 and 67**).



Figure 66 and 67 Artist Natasha Gornik, *Mistress Alex & slave I & II, NYC.*

Gornik's blog of the event records 'Exhibitionism':

there is an excitement that had been building up during the weeks prior to the experience and when Alex and i meet at the busy Italian market in the Flatiron it sits in both of our eyes and we are hungry for it. at this point Alex is not only a muse but a close friend so there is a level of understanding and trust that i find to be key ingredients in this sort of photographic experience and we head to the restroom to prep and it's a madhouse in the market humans like ants and once in she takes off her trench coat and underneath is shiny and black and latex and tight and stacked knee high boots and she visually screams dominance and everyone in the crowded room notices and i feel the air shift it's palpable and it clearly nourishes her hunger and right in front of my eyes she grows four feet taller and towers over the glances and i immediately get off on all of this and the feast begins right there in the Eataly ladies restroom. on the corner of 23rd and 5th she has him put on a black leather hood and a collar and we walk towards the subway and i can sense the attention but I've now started to photograph and once that happens it's like my surroundings melt away and i zoom in on my subjects and it is very busy in the city close to rush hour and we have chosen an overpopulated path which gives us even more of a high and i am completely focused on Alex and slave but can feel the energies from all who cross paths with and we exit at Times Square which is beyond crowded and Alex and her pet stop to look at my camera and i take a few photographs then pause and look around for a moment and people are snapping photos of them with their phones and the whole thing is so entertaining and we carry on up the stairs leash from collar to gloved hand through the streets and land right in the thick of it all and am not as interested in the reactions as i am in our actions and she buys a hot dog from a street vendor and shoves it down his throat as Mickey Mouse and Elmo pass out flyers to the Wax Museum and i am fucking loving this.

Characteristically of Gornik's work, her goal is not (merely) to document, but to capture the essence and experience of the scene through her camera. What is fascinating about the works is that people wear elements of fetish attire as everyday fashion in New York, without attracting a second glance. Costume-clad promoters hand out flyers and are part of the place. A 'Dominatrix', however, identifiable and recognisable by her attire of shiny black latex and stacked knee-high boots, which (as Gornik put it) visually scream

dominance, walking a hooded businessman around on a leash, attracts major attention and reactions.

Typically those who are most indignant are those who are spontaneously aroused and then ashamed of their own lust (and its implications for their erotic identity). Similar behaviour is seen around homosexuality, with the most vocal anti-gay campaigners often later realising and coming to acknowledge that they were themselves homosexual. They 'hate-on' in distress over the tumultuous combination of their own desire and its clash with their religious or cultural values.

In the reactions of the bystanders, Gornik captures the fascination, humour, amusement, shock, moral indignation, voyeurism, envy, curiosity, avoidance. In front of her eyes and camera, the phenomenon of people making themselves into tourists, spectators, voyeurs.

The range of responses that the Dominatrix elicits, feeds her own power, her enjoyment and satisfaction of drawing this alchemical reaction everywhere she treads. On the surface, nothing about the Dominatrix or her slave's attire is that far from social acceptability. Neither are naked. Both are completely covered-up. The slave wears a classic business suit, which is the epitome of socially correct work attire. The Dominatrix wears boots that, although once derived from the 'bizarre' fetish underground, have since become a common fashion staple. To pin-point the power of responses that this couple draw, is to turn focus upon the signifiers their outfits hold in people's minds and imaginations – the latex, the hood, and so on.

Mistress Alex and her slave do not perform any overtly sexual act, just interactions of Domination/submission. Mistress Alex walks her slave on a leash, bosses him around, orders herself a hot dog from a stand, and feeds some of it to her slave. It is the same behavior with which New Yorkers treat their small children, or dogs, in Central Park. So the social shock is in a 'grown man' being treated this way, not in the acts themselves. This is seen as humiliating to a man's position, for a man is meant to be upheld and in charge, and respected. The Dominatrix subverts and inverts this operation,

flipping it on its head. It is *Her* who is in charge and respected, and *he* whose status is lowered. Not only does this visually occur in front of the eyes of New Yorkers, but the ‘slave’ is clearly consenting to this and enjoying himself.

Mistress Alex and slave both ‘stick out’ and are at the same time completely at home in New York’s cultural geography. The point of difference is, of course, that this kind of behavior and attire is normally hidden away, behind closed doors. The Dominatrices of New York operate from dungeons and domestic BDSM boudoirs, which are most commonly unmarked, in discreet locations, known only to those who frequent and inhabit their world.

Between the Cracks, and into Another World

The Dominatrix operates ‘between the cracks’.² Most do not offer sex (in the conventional sense of the term) as part of their services, and thus do not fall into prostitution laws. Their practices exist in a grey area, but do not usually attract the attention of the police. Most are intelligent, professional, careful and ethical in their work. Only rarely does a problem occur that attracts attention.

How Dominatrices operate, however, has a direct relationship to jurisdictional laws and their enforcement. In places where sex work is decriminalised, such as in the state of New South Wales in Australia, Dominatrices work from either a large dungeon establishment, or have the freedom to set up their own owner-operator business from their home. Scarlett Alliance notes that ‘the law was introduced because of corruption by police, and by removing police as regulators has successfully addressed corruption.’³ (They add that in their view, police are ‘inappropriate regulators’ of the sex industry.) The law allows Dominatrices and other sex workers to access occupational health and safety, and for sex education to reach sex workers much more readily. A major report by John Goodwin with the United Nations Development Programme (Asia-Pacific Regional Centre) supports the decriminalisation model of places like New South Wales in Australia, and New Zealand.⁴

In other jurisdictions where sex work is illegal, Dominatrices are not covered by the terminology and are able to operate, in general terms. While some contest the idea that sex work is driven by demand, it is certainly true of Dominatrices. Upon researching the Dominatrix history and how women take up the profession, a common story echoed again and again is of desirous submissive men wanting to pay a female acquaintance to dominate them. Fetishistic men often want things such as opulent fur coats, or thigh-high leather boots and catsuits, to fulfill their desirous needs. These cost significant money to acquire. In addition, certain aspects of domination require complex skills and techniques, requiring training or experience to safely undertake. Bondage equipment is also expensive, so it is easy to see how it has become its own specialist profession. The Dominatrix profession was formed to meet the significant (niche) demand.

Dominatrices in many cases provide ‘services’ that a man’s girlfriend or wife do not want to, but which are nonetheless a deep ‘need’ in the perception of the man. As one submissive man put it:

I would try my best to bury my desires, to pretend they weren’t there, but it inevitably would pop up and I would feel guilty, then I’d try and push it back down again. But you can’t, you know? It’s part of who you are, a part of your identity and being. I guess it’s a bit like someone who’s gay trying to be straight. It’s difficult to live like that. It’s not honest or true to how you are. So eventually I told my wife. I was terrified and expected her to want to leave me. I expected the worst, and broke down and cried several times, explaining it all to her, how it started, how it affected me. And surprisingly she was actually really understanding. She’s not interested in whipping me or wearing leather herself, but she’s ok with me seeing a Dominatrix professionally, as long as it stays within those confines, and I tell her when I’m going. And it’s come as such a relief, to us both I think. She said she knew, parts of it, from my reactions or snippets of conversations. Some parts shocked her, and she had to get her head around. She says she’ll never completely understand it, but she loves me and we’ll see how it goes. And we both agree it’s gone better since. We seem to be in a happy equilibrium now, and it’s been three years since I told her. Came out really, I guess it is.⁵

In some cases, men keep it hidden from their girlfriend or wife. Some are single. Some identify as being submissive, slave or

masochist, some as a sissy, cross-dresser or other identification. The Dominatrix provides an open mind and space to explore a wide range of different identities, desires and 'needs'. Her clients include politicians, barristers, CEOs of companies, celebrity entertainers, blue-collar and white-collar workers from all walks of life. She is discreet, and keeps their privacy in confidence.

The Dominatrix typically operates with no signage on her door. Tucked away, most typically in an apartment flat, or a large 'establishment' housed within a villa or industrial warehouse, which appears to the outside to be completely 'normal'. Clients in the contemporary era obtain a Dominatrix's information from websites, contacting a Dominatrix or establishment via email or phone to arrange a 'session' (appointment). She discusses the individual's desires, needs, and her own terms and conditions. Limits are negotiated.

Many submissives reporting to see a Dominatrix describe the corner they turn, the stairs they climb, the doorway they nervously stand behind. The architectural approach forms part of their memory, representing a gateway into another world. As they wait for the door to be opened, they are on the threshold between their 'normal' life of social pressures, and an altered universe that belongs to the Dominatrix, in which they are in bondage to her and paradoxically freed to acknowledge and 'be' their true (hidden) self.



Figure 68 Ian Reid, *Thrill* (*Mistress Darcy lets her slave into her discreet lair*), 2013, New York City.

Photographer Ian Reid captured a submissive on the door threshold of ‘Mistress Darcy’ in Manhattan (see **Figure 68**). Mistress Darcy relates the demand for Dominatrices in New York as one of the ‘most ambitious cities in the world’, in which men are working hard climbing the corporate ladder and need respite from the environment and pressures:

The nervous system needs to enter a state of rest from time-to-time, and giving up control under the guidance of a gorgeous, powerful woman can be the perfect antidote to the demands of New York City. Most of the time a slave arrives ready to play, but sometimes he is still carrying stress, distractions or defences from the outside world; I then have to ease him into his own submission before we can play at the intense level that I enjoy.

That's why the first moment is so important; while I don't ever know exactly how someone will be feeling when they walk in, I determine their headspace almost immediately when they arrive. Because of this, that first moment is always thrilling – for my slave and me both.⁶

The dominance and assertiveness of the woman enables the man relief from his usual social role of having to make decisions. She relieves him of responsibility. She directs his movements. Decides his attire or nakedness, according to the type of session. Puts him through acts and procedures according to her initiative. Explores, plays, takes pleasure in the process and role. He is free to lose himself in this 'other world', in submission to a powerful woman. He is no longer John Smith, manager of fifth-floor subdivision of such-and-such a company. For the duration of that time, he is only Mistress's submissive, slave, a schoolboy, or sissy-maid, as fitting his internal identification. His 'outside' role is lifted off him for a period of respite.

The Ideal Dominatrix and Dominatrix Ideals

Dominatrices come in all ages, races and body shapes. There is no one 'type' of woman who is a Dominatrix. In the course of undertaking research for this book, the youngest Dominatrix I encountered was 21 years old, and the oldest was 76. (The median is around the 25–45 age bracket.) Ultimately, a Dominatrix's success comes down not to her age, but to erotic appeal and power, intuition of her client's needs, knowledge, skills, technique, wisdom, as well as pragmatic marketing and client management.

Each Dominatrix assumes a name and self-crafted identity, which is a usually a 'super-self' rather than a false self. She takes the traits and ideas of a powerful woman that resonate with her, and fashions her Dominatrix identity in a manner that is consciously attuned to male desire, as well as her own.

Within the role is something of a mystic, and an expert on the psychosexual realm, which draws influences from historical and mythical realms. Often a Dominatrix's chosen name will reflect this, evoking her own romantic ideal of the dominant woman (and self).

(Discussed further in the Chapter V, ‘Seven Realm Arts – Art of the Sublime and Powerful Woman’.)

The artist Kate Peters undertook an iconic series of photographic works on the Dominatrix, which made headlines of newspapers around the world.⁷ Her ‘Yes Mistress’ series came about following a chance meeting with a Dominatrix, which sparked her interest (see **Figures 69–71**). She wanted to see where it would take her, and if she could make sense of their world and the complex issues raised. Says Peters, ‘I wanted to create images that were open-ended and evocative. Too look beyond the stereotypes to produce a series that was psychologically compelling to the viewer. Role-play and fantasy form a large part of the Dominatrix’ work and I have always admired the way an actor can step into another role and then back to reality in an instant ... How much, if anything could I reveal from behind the ‘masks’ or is it the masks themselves that are more revealing?’

As part of this body of artwork, Peters had taken portraits of these women outside their dungeon world, placing them in a bright-light and white-photographic-studio environment, she puts their masquerade under the spotlight, shining light on their armour.

What Kate Peters’ Dominatrix portraits appear to reveal is that the Dominatrix is not merely a woman dressed in rôle – she becomes the woman she set out to play or ‘be’.

Many experienced Dominatrices will attest to this; that in time, after more and more ‘sessions’, they were no longer providing a ‘service’ as a Dominatrix role, but that they became *Her*. That while they could shed the role somewhat in their ‘normal’ life, out with friends and family, that part of them was forever *Her*.

Initially, they change between themselves and their Dominatrix role, like a mask adopted and shed. However, when left to develop their Dominatrix practice creatively, given relative free reign to evolve their own style, they came to relish parts of playing *Her*, and gradually over time became more integrated. The assertive dominance that was part of their role was used to enable entrepreneurial or educational pursuits, as well as the counter-balance of female nurturing that is also a part (an overlooked part) of

being a Dominatrix.

Peters' portraits show women who are in command of their *selves* and lives, Dominatrix and otherwise. Three portraits illustrated here in this book, of Mistress Absolute, Madame Caramel and Mistress Jezabel, are all experienced London Dominatrices who relish their role. They are as comfortable under the studio light as within their dungeon, and their individual fetish attire reflects their own tastes as Dominatrices.

Mistress Absolute wears her favourite latex-rubber riding jacket (from *Breathless in London*), with elegant cleavage exposing exactly as much as she wants of herself, standing with hands on hips (see **Figure 69**). Her Dominatrix identity is not far removed from her real-life identity, both of which she approaches with confidence and a healthy sense of amusement and humour. She is undertaking a PhD on the subject of cuckolding, and has changed her real-life name by deed poll to integrate her Mistress identity within the middle of her name. Mistress Absolute is actively involved in the fetish scene clubs and events (including running 'Club Subversion', and Dominatrix-holidaying on 'Domme Trips' with colleague Dominatrices and their slaves).



Figure 69 Artist Kate Peters, *Mistress Absolute* (*Yes Mistress* series), 20 × 24", limited edition C-type hand print.

Madame Caramel is a deliciously curvaceous Dominatrix who runs a club event, known as 'Club Black Whip', and identifies as a 'Superior Black Mistress' (see **Figure 70**). Amongst her hobbies are making the most of her generous hips and buttocks to face-sit on 'puny' white slaves, who hold her in absolute adoration.



Figure 70 Artist Kate Peters, *Madame Caramel* (*Yes Mistress* series), 20 × 24", limited edition C-type hand print.

Mistress Jezabel is famous amongst submissives who adore the 'alternative' look, with her intricate body art and piercings (see **Figure 71**). She is highly intelligent and personable, pursuing advanced university education alongside her Dominatrixing, and is seen out at lifestyle fetish events in often brightly coloured custom latex-rubber dresses in colours such as pink, orange, purple and turquoise.



Figure 71 Artist Kate Peters, *Mistress Jezabel* (Yes Mistress series), 20 × 24", limited edition C-type hand print.

It is interesting to note that just as the ‘Birch Disciplinarian’ courtesans of the eighteenth century attracted portraitists as models, Mistress Jezabel also attracted the attentions of one of the great portrait artists of the new generation in England, Stuart Pearson Wright (see **Figure 72**). He reportedly approached Mistress Jezabel not knowing she was a Dominatrix, having seen her photographs and tattoos on a body-art website, and approached her to model for him.⁸ As an oil-portrait artist, Pearson Wright was particularly interested in the technical challenges of portraying tattoos on the skin within the painting medium, as well as their aesthetic qualities. The resulting oil portrait of Mistress Jezabel in an oval-format frame has the qualities of traditional portraiture, with the contemporary new-world beauty of the ‘fetish Goddess’. The painting was exhibited with other portraits including one of celebrity actress Keira Knightley.



Figure 72 Artist Stuart Pearson Wright, *Portrait of Mistress Jezabel*, oil on canvas with oval frame.

Not all Dominatrices are able to (nor want to) live with their identity so integrated into their ‘real lives’, and it is a reflection of a more open society that some are able to do so while pursuing advanced university education or running fetish events in London (which has a strong BDSM and fetish subculture to support them in their interests and pursuits). When Kate Peters was undertaking portraits for her ‘Yes Mistress’ series, a number of Dominatrices were unable to participate or have portraits of them shown, due to concerns for their privacy, and to protect their family or acquaintances from being exposed to their work.

As part of the research for this book, a number of Dominatrices described run-ins or even full-scale rejection by family members when they ‘came out’ about their occupation. This goes to the social judgment of sex workers more broadly, clashing with religious and

moral values, as well as to ignorance about what it is that a Dominatrix actually does.

There are many stereotypes around Dominatrices, few of which are true. Many may be interested to know that the only real trends that hold true are that Dominatrices tend to be above average in intelligence, open-minded, independent, interested in sexuality, and hold strong ideals.

In a survey study by sociologist Danielle Lindemann, 39 per cent of New York Dominatrices were found to hold a graduate degree or higher.⁹ It is a cliché (but there is some truth in it) that many Dominatrices either studied or go on to study psychology. Other popular subjects are history, literature, gender and sexuality, and health and medicine. Dominatrices with less privileged backgrounds, which may have discouraged them from pursuing advanced education, exhibit strong ‘street smarts’ and are generally found to have a high IQ. Outside of academia, Dominatrices often study sexological bodywork, tantra, Japanese *shibari* and Western-style ropes bondage. The vast majority have medical training in resuscitation and basic first aid.

A Dominatrix’s clients are by far and away male. Although a small minority percentage are female or a couple. (see Natasha Gornik – Realm VII image)

Dominatrices come into professional domination from a range of backgrounds and jobs. There are four backgrounds that are most common; a medical/therapeutic background, an educational/institutional background, a theatrical/performance background, or an erotic arts/sex-work background.

Around 5 per cent of Dominatrices are born males, and are transvestite or transgender. They bring their own experience and unique point of view to understanding gender and sexuality.

What is possibly most distinct about Dominatrices is that they are open-minded and hold strong ideals. A much higher proportion than the general population are vegan or vegetarian, and are so due to beliefs around the treatment of animals. (As English Dominatrix Mistress Absolute would say, tongue-in-cheek, ‘Well, I have to be nice

to something.')

Those Dominatrices who eat meat often do so with a seemingly heightened awareness of the animal's sacrifice for food, and the ritual use of meat. With a tendency to like being in control, this extends into the realm of food and what goes in their body. It makes life interesting for the chefs and caterers of Dominatrix-convention gatherings.

Dominatrices base their BDSM practices on ethical ideals, and adopt practices that are 'Safe, Sane and Consensual' (SSC), or 'Risk-Aware Consensual Kink', which is abbreviated to 'RACK'. These concepts are based on informed consent and risk-awareness.

Dominatrices seek to educate and inform their clients of risk, and consider health and safety in their play. They also will often refuse or modify particular forms of play in consideration of a person's medical conditions, medications, fitness level and age, and mitigate risk where possible. As trust is so important to BDSM play, Dominatrices hold themselves to a level of behavior and judgment that fosters trust.

Dominatrices discuss limits with their clients, as to what they are not prepared to 'take' in sessions. This may mean avoidance of marks. It may relate to levels of pain, to phobias, or to particular content that a client is not prepared to receive. What is appealing, arousing or productive at pushing boundaries in a session for one person, may not be for another. For example, certain types of humiliation may be deeply arousing and emphasise the Dominant/submissive relationship for some, whereas for others it may be psychologically distressing in the extreme and trigger childhood trauma. There is no 'one size fits all' when it comes to dominating an individual.

A Dominatrix sets a 'safe word' with her client, which is commonly a word such as 'Mercy', or uses the 'traffic light system' – in which 'red' means stop, 'amber/yellow' means nearing a limit and 'green' means everything is okay. As she gets to know her client well over time, this system may become less relied upon, as she comes to understand his limits, pain threshold, sensitivities and phobias.

The Tertiary Training and Schooling of a Dominatrix

To train as a professional Dominatrix takes a year or longer, and is

usually undertaken without pay. Those aspiring to the occupation of professional domination most often take a formal apprenticeship with a senior established Mistress, or within a discipline establishment. Many outside of the world of BDSM find it surprising to hear that there is something similar to a university course in Dominatrixing. The skills, technique and psychological understanding required by a professional Dominatrix, however, certainly justify such a length of apprenticeship, which covers areas of bondage, suspension, corporal punishment, cross-dressing and transformation, and so on.

In Australia, aspiring 'newbie' Mistresses most typically intern at one of the 'houses' of domination. One of the most highly regarded and well-known of the large establishments was Salon Kitty's in Sydney. It has put through a significant number of successful and talented Dominatrices in its 28-year history, and undertaking an internship there garnered respect of colleagues and clients the world-over.

Salon Kitty's was established in October 1985, when a number of Mistresses were looking for somewhere to carry out their sessions, and came together with an entrepreneur in a Victorian mansion in the old Victoria Street area of Sydney.¹⁰ Bondage houses had previously been mostly 'small seedy places hiding in the inner suburbs of Sydney'. By contrast, Salon Kitty's sought to have a stable and professional establishment, coinciding with a new enlightenment regarding psychosexual services in Australia.¹¹

Some four years after its establishment, ownership was taken over by Mistress Amanda Dwyer, who ran the establishment for most of its lifespan (see **Figure 73**). She had apprenticed herself as a Mistress in 1986, and after a bout of overseas travelling, and operating in Petersham, NSW, as both a Dominatrix and submissive, took over as owner of Salon Kitty's in 1989.¹² Its location was moved to the inner-city suburb of Surrey Hills in 1990, which was conveniently only 6 minutes by taxi from Sydney's city centre.



Figure 73 Mistress Amanda Dwyer, owner of Salon Kitty's.

The establishment came to be the most well-known house of domination in Australia, and a training ground for Dominatrices. What set it apart was the professional and clean set-up of its rooms, and the accomplished women who worked there. Two adjoining Victorian terraces were refurbished and specially equipped to accommodate the needs of the Dominatrices, submissives and their clients. Its chambers included a famous 'Red Room' in a dungeon

style, with nuanced equipment including a birthing chair, adapted for purpose, and a stretching rack bondage bench (see **Figure 74**). Other rooms accommodated bondage and discipline, complex suspension (the 'Brass Room'), with some rooms set up as a realistic-appearing boudoir, and a large wardrobe with uniforms, cross-dressing and fetish attire, wigs, shoes and hosiery, for transformation and role-play.



Figure 74 Salon Kitty's 'Red Dungeon Room', Sydney, Australia.

Its owner, Mistress Amanda Dwyer, had long been an active advocate for sex-worker safety and advice, conducting workshops on safe practices and hygiene issues in BDSM activities.¹³ The women who apprenticed there were accordingly well trained in every aspect of BDSM, safety, hygiene and sterilisation, and the premises reportedly met the approval of authorities, including health departments. Gaining the understanding of the public and authorities, however, did not come overnight. Amanda wrote an advice column for a local publication, *Naughty Sydney*, for 11 years until the Australian censors at the time made it impossible to discuss genuine BDSM issues under the classification of that particular publication.¹⁴

The apprenticeship undertaken at Salon Kitty's was rigorous not

only in respect of the training, but in surviving the ‘pecking order’ and power dynamics that go along with such an establishment of dominant women, and the high expectations of the professional apprenticeship. Women who wanted to apprentice would have to formally apply and be interviewed to assess whether they were suitable. Those who were accepted would often quit and leave only part-way in, or be at some point fired and rehired by Mistress Amanda Dwyer.¹⁵

Salon Kitty’s closed down in 2013, when its owner Mistress Amanda Dwyer posted, ‘no sickness, no sadness, no financial difficulties, just time to move on to another phase of life.’¹⁶ Salon Kitty’s equipment was sold off to other Dominatrices who worked there and in a rather noteworthy auction held at Lawson’s. Under the hammer were items that included studded leather hoods, framed surgical instruments, cane jars, electric stimulator devices, metal handcuffs, a cattle prod and electric dog collar, and Mistress Amanda’s own box of whips.¹⁷

Training at Salon Kitty’s or other establishments typically involves doing the legwork of cleaning and sterilising, running errands for the senior Mistresses, and generally making oneself as useful as possible in the hope that one or more experienced Dominatrices would take the apprentice under their wing. Apprentices go into sessions of experienced Dominatrices and assist them by passing equipment. They observe all the goings-on, and soak up as much of the information and techniques as possible. More formal training sessions are conducted on how to use a flogger, how to cane, how to administer an enema, how to use electric devices safely, and so on. Only in time are trainees gradually more involved in co-conducting sessions alongside experienced Dominatrices, learning to ‘hold space’ in a mode of female dominance, participate in restraint, lowering of the slave, psychological power-play and using the techniques and skills they acquire during training.

Most trainees also learn by experiencing being a ‘submissive’, receiving themselves the same types of treatment that Dominatrices give out to their clients. This is a learning at-both-ends-of-the-stick.

They would be receiving the cane, as well as learning to cane themselves.

Many trainees would also supplement their apprenticeship with reading books related to BDSM activities and relationship dynamics, watching activities and techniques on video footage, and actively participating in the ‘fetish scene’ events.

As Domina V would relate:

My Mistress apprenticeship was an experience that I will never forget. I think the fact I had gone through a hairdressing apprenticeship when I was younger helped me understand the meaning of disciplined training. During my time there, I saw many women come and go. Many of them never lasted as their approach was too relaxed and it was hard work ... but the Training was second to none.

Domina V used her training to go on and become a highly professional Dominatrix with her own beautifully equipped chambers in London, and more recently in Brighton. In fact, Domina V would use both apprenticeships – hairdressing and Dominatrixing – to inform her practices, by operating (alongside her dungeon-based practices) a specialist ‘Fluffy Boudoir’, which offers ‘a safe place for sissies’ (see **Figure 75**). She brings her expertise at make-up, hair, cross-dressing, gender transformation and the psychology of diverse sexual and gendered identifications to bear on her sessions and craft.



Figure 75 Domina V in her Fluffy Boudoir – A Safe Place for Sissies

Some Dominatrices also used Salon Kitty's for their work and development rather than their apprenticeship. Mistress Tokyo is an internationally regarded Dominatrix who is particularly adept at Japanese *shibari* ropes-bondage and suspension, latex and medical play (amongst many other areas). She originally apprenticed at a smaller conservative house called 'The House of Domination', before later working at Salon Kitty's in Sydney. The experiences she had

there were used to help springboard her professional development, and she went on to set up her own very impressive playspace close to Sydney's central business district, which reflects her own evolving style and interests (see **Figure 76**). Her 'Industrial Room' is set up with stylish 1950s-era equipment, including an authentic dentist's chair and surgical stainless-steel operating theatre. While her 'Art Room' features a permanently rigged Japanese bondage ring and art photography of the Mistress's own Japanese bondage creations, captured by photographer Lucas Messerer.

For both these Dominatrices, Salon Kitty's was a stepping-stone on their greater journey of learning and developing their own style and interests within the array of activities and specialisations that exist within the craft profession.

Down in Adelaide in South Australia, Fetish Palace (formerly 'The Purple Palace') offers a rigorous two-year training course for aspiring Dominatrices. As Mistress Electra Amore reports:

To train as a Professional Mistress is a two-year commitment, where the first part of the first year is dedicated to learning the foundations of the industry and basically at the beck and call of all who work at the establishment. It is during this period that will determine if the chosen lady has the qualities that are required to become a Professional Dominatrix. The second part of the first year, the Mistress in training is expected to assist in sessions with other Mistresses and start to conduct basic sessions herself. If by the end of the first year all requirements have been met, then and only then is she granted to use a title of her choice, but never before. The second year is a period of time where mentoring is more prevalent than training, and this is when the Mistress in training gets to establish her own style and conduct sessions by herself.¹⁸

Fetish Palace's rooms are specially equipped to offer the full gamut of activities relating to the Dominatrix's craft, from cross-dressing, 'slut-training', worship and elevation of the female, medical play, dungeon and fantasy-themed scenarios, masochism and corporal punishment (see **Figure 77**).



Figure 76 Mistress Tokyo at play in her dungeon, Sydney, Australia.

Mistress Electra Amore's own experience includes having worked in London and with Lady Riva in Germany, where she was exposed to the cultural nuances and practices in each country. England, she reported, has a very specific corporal punishment (CP) scene, with female 'spankees' receiving punishment and Dominatrices in role of Head Mistress or Work Boss, administering discipline. This traditional English CP 'scene' with traditional school punishment equipment goes on in addition to (and often distinctively separate from) dungeon-style domination. Germany has a greater focus on latex-rubber practices and fetish, and bondage play, both of which she would take on board in her learning, adding to her own practices and expertise, and in turn pass on to new trainees.

Most Dominatrices report that their training isn't merely a one-off apprenticeship, but a career-long commitment to learning and acquiring new skills. One of the reasons that so many Dominatrices enjoy working together in establishments (aside from the safety benefits and pragmatism of sharing costs) is the rich environment of sharing knowledge, skills and ideas.

Some Dominatrices are self-taught or experienced through the lifestyle scene, although this is less common to find amongst the top-tier of respected professionals. (A small number do form the exception to this rule, particularly in London where there are no houses to train in due to the English laws around sex work.)





Figure 77 Cuntress Gabrielle and Mistress Electra Amore, Fetish Palace, Adelaide.

One of the problems within the industry is the presence of so-called ‘fake Dominatrices’, a term used to describe women who set up with a website, with no training or experience, and very little idea as to what they are doing. These women do not tend to last long, with slave clients being quick to sniff out a lack of expertise and incompetence. As one Dominatrix put it, ‘any woman with a boyfriend web designer and some good photographs can set up purporting to be experienced. They tarnish the industry and do damage to the name of the profession.’

This concern about untrained, unknowledgeable women purporting to be ‘professional Dominatrices’ has become a larger issue in the Internet era. There’s also no easy solution to the problem. There’s certainly no regulatory body of Dominatrices. It’s an underground industry whose practices are nuanced and passed down by professional seniors, and as such the internship experience within a domination house or under the wing of a well-respected senior Dominatrix forms part of the curriculum vitae for many Dominatrices in the marketing of their abilities and experience.

Slaves often comment that they look out for a Dominatrix whose

name has been around for a while, having seen her advertising for a few years, before visiting her. Some share their recommendations by word-of-mouth and through Internet forums. They also look to see who the Dominatrix has as her contacts and partners on her website, to gauge her professional alliances and allegiances to others who are well-regarded. They examine her equipment and set-up on her website, which give a possible indication of her professionalism and commitment to her craft.

Playspace and Equipment

In the twenty-first century, the Dominatrix profession is an increasingly sophisticated one in respect of equipment and set-up. This has been brought about partly by the availability of BDSM equipment in stores and online. Whereas it was once very difficult to go about acquiring leather hoods and bondage equipment, the Internet and international shipping has removed the barriers to Mistresses setting up professionally.

Some Dominatrices set up within a domestic or 'boudoir' space, which may be preferred for the femininity of the 'woman's space' as she likes it to be set up, and for its comparative sense of reality. These are often set up with a desk or table to enable versatile scenarios such as the Headmistress or Office Boss.



Figure 78 Artist Phil Miller, *Mistress Morrigan in her dungeon*, 2013.

The most ubiquitous form of professional ‘playspace’ for a Dominatrix, however, is the ‘dungeon’. The term refers to the fantasy environment of simulated imprisonment, in which the Dominatrix holds her client captive and at her mercy. It is part-theatre and part-

workspace. Some Dominatrices chose to emphasise the dramatic *mis en scène* as moody and aesthetic backdrop, while others take a pragmatic approach to their space as a workshop of trade tools with racks of equipment laid out for easy access. It is not unusual for a Dominatrix to spend tens of thousands of pounds in equipment and attire.

The most common ‘dungeon’ colours are black, red, purple or burgundy. These correlate to colour psychology and the arousing effects of red-based hues, the sinister darkness of black, and the regal and spiritual associations of purple-based hues. London artist Phil Miller has undertaken a body of photographic work on the Dominatrix’s ‘playspace’, revealing the intimate environments of these women, not normally accessible to the outside world. His portrait of Mistress Morrigan shows her in black Dominatrix attire, against the atmospheric backdrop of her dungeon with rotating bondage wheel and cage (see **Figure 78**). She stands with hands on hips, with commanding body language. In other photographs from his series on Dominatrices, Miller captures the hidden ‘Lady’s Lair’ located near King’s Cross and St Pancras in London, with its bespoke equipment and Orientalist décor (see **Figure 79**).



Figure 79 Dungeon Images, Artist Phil Miller, 'Lady's Lair', London.

Although each Dominatrix's playspace is individual, there are some trends that typify the set-up of the space. These reflect the practical requirements of activities undertaken within a playspace, as well as conventions that have evolved overtime. The most common pieces of equipment are as follows:

Horizontal Bondage Bench

For laying a submissive client out horizontally and strapping him down to. These are usually made out of steel for strength and support of body weight, with fixing points of leather belt straps or rope to restrain the submissive. Common variations include 'stretching rack' features, and upwards-extending steel framework to attach additional bondage to, or to raise nipple clamps for pain or resistance, and to provide a support frame for trampling on slaves in stiletto heel or barefoot. Many bondage benches are padded with leather or vinyl, which can be cleaned with disinfectant afterwards. Some are upholstered as a 'gummi-bench' for latex-rubber play, to cater to rubber fetishes.

Vertical-Oriented Frame

The most common of these is the ubiquitous St Andrew's Cross, which forms an 'X' shape that may also be angled, onto which a client is restrained. (Its shape avoids the Christian '+' cross of crucifixion.) These are made of steel or wood, most commonly. Another popular piece of vertical-oriented equipment is the whipping post, derived from the historical device used for public punishment. Bondage wheels are also popular, particularly in Asian countries in which the large wheel of a cart was traditionally adapted to the dungeon setting, and in more recent times has been developed into a technically advanced, revolving bondage wheel. Some Dominatrices also have a vertical 'cobweb' frame onto which a submissive can be attached, playing on the role of the Dominatrix as female spider and

weaver.

Bend-Over and Kneeling Bench

The kneeling corporal-punishment bench ('CP bench') is a frame that is designed to position the submissive's buttocks in the air, at an angle for punishment. (Sometimes these are also used for anal penetration, however, with men it is more common to use a 'gynaecological' upwards-positioned bench, chair or sling for this purpose, which is a more comfortable angle in general for anal play.) These are often padded, with a leather or vinyl surface for comfort, particularly on the knees. They typically feature leather restraint straps or fixing points for rope. More traditional English-style benches may do away with restraints in favour of the more realistic look of a vintage gym horse. Variations on the bend-over bench include instead a pillory, or 'stocks', to lock a victim's head in place through a hole, along with his wrists, for imprisonment and punishment.

Cage

Dominatrices often have one of a wide range of cages to suit their purposes and space. These may be a large bird's cage, a standing cell cage, a horizontal full-length cage for sleeping and long-term horizontal imprisonment, or a restrictive 'puppy cage', to name the most common forms. Some cages are also designed for suspension, so that the cage can be lifted off the ground with a 'prisoner' inside, and the swinging nature of it increases the intensity of captivity. There are also varieties of restraints such as manacles and shackles, which may also be fixed to the wall, or steel head cages, and penis cages or chastity devices, which utilise encaging. Steel metal is the most preferred material in terms of cages, for its sense of cold strength and inescapability.

Throne Chair

For the Dominatrix to sit on, as discussed in the following section on the 'Seven Realm Arts – Art of the Sublime and Powerful Woman'.

Bondage and Interrogation Chair

A strong chair with bondage straps for securing a submissive to it, in seated position. These will often have a V-shaped base, so that the legs are separated apart, enabling access to the genital and anal region, and increasing the sense of vulnerability. Some Dominatrices will have a multifunctional throne that converts into a bondage chair, to make the most of a small space or limited pieces of equipment. While others prefer to keep these chairs entirely distinctive symbolically and functionally, keeping a regal throne chair for themselves, and a scary-looking bondage-and-interrogation chair to attach a slave to. The restraint chair is most commonly made out of steel so that a slave who 'bucks' while in the chair being put to pain, cannot accidentally tip the chair over. Well-supported framed wooden chairs for this purpose and design do also exist.

Sensory Deprivation Box/Cupboard

This is a piece of furniture designed to imprison the captive in a small space with psychological intensity, and deprive him of his senses of sight, hearing, and so forth. An element of this effect is the dark-cocoon or womb-like experience of sensory deprivation, which may be amplified by soft cushioned walls that also effect the muting of sound. Others are hard-surfaced and emphasise physical discomfort, entrapment and punishment. The absence or distance from the Dominatrix, of being 'left alone', may also be brought home. The deprivation of senses enhances sensitivity and focus, so that touch, for example, becomes more intense. The effects of sensory deprivation can become more intense over time, producing altered states of consciousness, meditative-like states, or paradoxically, increased fear. In shamanic religion, shamans will often seek out a cave-like space in preparation for rites of trance and ecstasy; the Dominatrix also plays on this potential in putting her submissive into sensory deprivation. Other pieces of equipment used by Dominatrices to achieve this effect are body bags or sleepsacks, and restrictive hoods or gas masks. Indeed as a small piece of equipment, leather or rubber hoods are the most common form of sensory deprivation equipment. Modern latex-

rubber ‘vac beds’ are also popular, in which a person is sandwiched in rubber with the air sucked out so that they are immobilised with just an airhole to breathe through.

Suspension Frame/Point

Most ‘craft’ Dominatrices have some form of suspension frame or suspension point. These are arranged with respect to the particular space from which they session, as to what suspension frame type they are able to fit within their room. Commonly professional suspension is custom-made in steel to fit the stud height of the room. Some Dominatrices may utilise an existing structural beam within the internal architecture of the space. Whatever the suspension system, it is often set up with help of a structural engineer or tradesperson, in consideration of the required strength. The fixing point and suspension set-up needs not only to far exceed the weight of the person being suspended, but also consider the dynamic load of a moving person. Consideration is given to emergency release systems, to get a person down safely and quickly from suspension if required. Along with the suspension frame or rig itself, is strong equipment or special suspension rope and carabiners, which are engineered for purpose. The equipment is regularly checked and replaced at a particular point within its lifespan, for safety.

Gynaecological Angled Bench/Chair

For anal play in particular, many Dominatrices have a gynaecological bench or chair that is angled with legs in stirrups for access. Alternatives to this include a suspended ‘sit sling’, which is usually made of leather, and of adjustable height for anal play. These allow access to the male G-spot through anal penetration and stimulation, and the angled positioning with legs split open can leave the person aflush with feelings of submission.

Medical Surgical and Simulated Torture Equipment

Many Dominatrices have a special medical room or area in their playspace. This reflects both fantasy nurse and medical scenarios,

which emphasise the sense of ‘bodiliness’ (see Chapter V, ‘Seven Realm Arts’), and provide an examination and procedure bench, and a clinically sterile area for play. Some of the common medical equipment used by many Dominatrices includes enema kits, speculums, dildos, disposable sterile needles, Wartenberg wheel, metal dental gags, professionally sterilised urethral sounds, catheters and other such objects. Some will use a medical surgical bench, dentist’s chair or gynaecological converting bench as the equipment on which to secure a submissive ‘patient’ to. The psychological aspect of play may also be emphasised through use of psychiatric restraint equipment, straightjacket and bench restraints. ‘Quack’ medical equipment is also often collected by Dominatrices. ‘Violet wands’ (or ‘violet ray devices’), for example, are electro-medical devices that were designed to supposedly cure all range of medical ailments in history (including the imaginary ailment of ‘hysteria’ in women). They consist of a control unit with a set of contract breakers, a coil and a capacitor, and a set with a variety of different-shaped glass electrodes. These produce a distinctive violet–purple glow in the dark, and produce a buzzing sound when in use, with a prickly sensation and spark on the skin.¹⁹ The historical vintage machines need to be safely reconditioned by an expert, such as a specially qualified electrician, and regularly checked. Modern-day erotic electrics sets have also risen in popularity, to such an extent that they are now available from mainstream sex shops, with power boxes and a variety of electrical conductive attachments and pads. One of the most common items put to erotic use and simulated torture is nipple clamps, which are often paired with weights (which may also be used to weigh down a tie bound around the male genitalia at the base of the testicles).

Corporal Punishment Equipment

Most Dominatrices keep a range of corporal punishment equipment, derived from historical punishment purposes and from animal training. These include whips, floggers, canes, paddles, straps (and strops), tawses, riding crops, and so forth. Many attempt to reproduce

historically accurate implements from prisons or schools. (See Chapter V, 'The Seven Realm Arts'.)

Small-Scale Bondage and Restraint Fetters

One or more types of slave collar is one of the most common pieces of a Dominatrix's equipment used on her submissive 'slave'. These may be in leather (most commonly), thick-gauge rubber or metal. Some types are designed to restrict the head and neck into a particular position, known as 'posture collars'. These may be used with a leash, emphasising the training relationship in an animalistic fashion.

Other pieces of bondage equipment include wrist and ankle restraints, most commonly in leather or steel metal (including police cuffs or heavyweight shackle manacles). Metal spreader bars are used to force the legs open. Leather or rubber straightjackets, or body suits, are also popular to intensify the sense of entrapment and submission. Mouth gags feature in a variety of different shapes and formats, including ball gags, bit gags, inflatable gags, and so on. Front-bucking gags are commonly used when a slave is laid out on his back, to enable them to be quickly released from the front if he experiences any breathing difficulties. A special safe-word signal (hand gesture) is used to signify any problem when a submissive is gagged in such a way that he is unable to communicate. A Dominatrix takes extra care when a slave is gagged and bound not to ever leave the room with him in that state, in case he gets into any difficulty.

Cross-Dressing and Exotic Costume

Most Dominatrices keep a substantial wardrobe both for themselves and for their clients. This includes elements of lingerie, hosiery, stiletto shoes and fetish boots, and garments in fetish latex rubber or leather, such as skirts, catsuits, corsets, and so on. Costumes and uniforms, such as French maid, school uniforms and nurse's uniform, are also common. An area of wigs and cosmetic make-up with packets of eyelashes and sterilised brushes and applicators emphasises the transformation of the 'make-over'. These spaces highlight the women's arts of cosmetics, perfumes and tools of erotic allure.

This list is not intended to be fully comprehensive – there are always pieces of individual equipment and sub-specialisations that Dominatrices practice. It is intended only to give an idea of some of the most common forms of equipment used by Dominatrices in practicing their ‘Realm Arts’.

Endnotes

- 1 Natasha Gornik, see website:
<http://www.natashagornik.com/about-contact/>
- 2 Acknowledgement to David Jackson of *DDI* magazine who used this phrase.
- 3 Scarlett Alliance (<http://www.scarlettalliance.org.au/laws/nsw/>).
- 4 Goodwin, John. ‘Sex Work and the Law in Asia and the Pacific: Laws, HIV and Human Rights in the Context of Sex Work’, UNDP Asia-Pacific Regional Centre and UNFPA Asia-Pacific Regional Office, in partnership with UNAIDS, Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers and others (2012) (viewable at:
<http://maggiemcneill.files.wordpress.com/2012/04/hiv-2012-sexworkandlaw.pdf>).
- 5 In conversation with the author.
- 6 In email correspondence with the author.
- 7 Llewelyn-Smith, J. ‘Tough love: the lives and times of the Dominatrix’ in the *Telegraph* 13 December, 2009.
(<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/6798038/Tough-love-the-lives-and-times-of-a-dominatrix.html>) and Williams, H. ‘Unleashed: The secret world of Britain’s Dominatrices’ in *The Independent* 20 November, 2011. (<http://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/love-sex/fantasies-fetishes/unleashed-the-secret-world-of-britains-dominatrixes-6263209.html>)
- 8 In email correspondence with the author, Mistress Jezabel.
- 9 Lindemann, D. cited in Glass, C. ‘The Dungeon Economy’, *New York Press*, 2 March 2011; see also her book Lindemann, D. *Dominatrix: Gender, Eroticism and Control in the Dungeon* (Chicago: University of

Chicago Press, 2012).

- 10 Information from Salon Kitty's website (<http://www.salonkittys.com/salonkittys/about.shtml#aa>).
- 11 Ibid.
- 12 In private email correspondence with Mistress Amanda Dwyer of Salon Kitty's, Sydney.
- 13 Earlier in her career Amanda Dwyer launched the Government-funded *Sex Workers Handbook* for SWOP (Sex Workers Outreach Project) contributing education and advice regarding safe practice and hygiene issues in BDSM. She conducted workshops for SWOP and other groups teaching sex workers safe BDSM practices. She was 'spokesperson' for the New South Wales Parlour Industry Association in the early 1990s, representing the sex industry in New South Wales, and continued to be involved in this capacity as a consultant to various members of Australian Parliament regarding legislation issues.
- 14 In email correspondence with Mistress Amanda Dwyer of Salon Kitty's.
- 15 Personal research and acquaintance with numerous Salon Kitty's and ex-Salon Kitty's Dominatrices.
- 16 Salon Kitty's website (<http://www.salonkittys.com/>), accessed August, 2013.
- 17 Lawsons auction, 'Salon Kitty's' 12 April 2013 (http://www.lawsons.com.au/asp/searchresults.asp?explicit=true&pg=1&st=D&sale_no=7926A&ps=100&).
- 18 In private email correspondence with Mistress Electra Amore of Fetish Palace, Adelaide.
- 19 See Nick and Morphia website for information on violet wands (<http://www.nickandmorphia.com/indexHow.asp>).

Chapter V

The Seven Realm Arts

Dominatrices themselves will often offer an overwhelmingly long A to Z list of areas and activities to which they cater for, listing every kind of practice and fetish. Other Dominatrices specialise in particular areas they enjoy and have specialist training and equipment to cater to, focusing on a niche within a niche.

After watching and participating with professional Dominatrices over the course of four years, a distinct pattern of practices emerged, and variations on these themes. I have characterised these as the ‘Seven Realm Arts’ of the Dominatrix craft, as follows:

Realm 1

The Art of the Sublime and Powerful Woman

Realm 2

The Art of Lowering the Man to Submission

Realm 3

The Art of Bondage, Entrapment and Enclosure

Realm 4

The Art of Discipline, Training and Punishment

Realm 5

The Art of the Bodily and the ‘Out-of-Body’

Realm 6

The Art of Cross-Dressing and Subversion

Realm 7

The Art of Fetish and Fantasy

The images accompanying Realm 1–6 are by Lucina Nathanael and Nuît d’Or, as visual artists, players and lovers, based in London. They write:

Lucina Nathanael: *“If it were presented as being based on an artistic collaboration that would feel strange as somehow it is a half story. We have collaborated artistically because it has become an expression of our relationship. Our relationship became love born from an encounter, the nature of which is a key theme of this book (male seeks out dominant woman, the skilled dominatrix utilises her art and power, lowers the man in submission etc. the ensuing relationship is based upon multiple connections, the collaboration is one expression of and from within our relationship).”*

Nuît d’Or: *“The genesis of our collaboration is twofold: As an artist and a Dominatrix it very quickly became one of my endeavours to nurture and mentor Lucina’s talent as a photographer. For my part, Lucina has been my muse as well as my submissive/mentor/Lover and the images that results from our sessions are ‘traces’ and ‘suspended moments’ in a medium new to my practice as a visual artist.”*

The Realm 7 pair of images are by Brooklyn NY-based artist Natasha Gornik, documenting an intimate experience with Mexico city-based Domme Jaguar & couple, of which I reproduce an exert of her accompanying text:

Natasha Gornick: *“Submission ... the room smelled of sex afterwards and no sex had been had it was the smell of submission and dominance and wanting and receiving and giving and fetish and watching and intimacy and trust and i sit here on my little green chair staring at the images on my*

big computer screen and come across one and immediately i begin to ache and pulsate and my eyelids grow heavy and my forearms limp and i get so emotional and so immensely turned on and i go back to the moment when i saw it with my eyes and my breathe had been heavy as was theirs and i wanted it bad i don't know what ...”

Realm 1

The Art of the Sublime and Powerful Woman

At the heart of female domination is the Dominatrix's elevated status and position of female authority. Dominatrices embody sublime women, who impress their power, allure and special knowledge upon men. (As the sirens call, *‘all that comes to pass on this fertile earth, we know.’*) The Dominatrix is, in a sense, a sorceress of the psychosexual.

The Dominatrix uses a name that is both a pseudonym, stage name and alter ego. It protects her anonymity and real-life identity, while at the same time it allows her to live out a super version of herself and develop her Dominatrix identity.

Frequent titles include Mistress, Maîtresse, Herrin or Lady; formal titles of Madame, Miss, Ms (or Mz); or of Domina, Goddess, Empress, Queen; denoting a certain kind of emphasis within their role and practices. Names chosen often have a flavour of the feminine mystical, exotic or foreign elements, and an accent of power.¹

In constructing a name, a Dominatrix may look to mythology, to characters from literature and film, to names that relate to their cultural affiliation, as well as examining the sound and written qualities of their name. The capitalisation of the first letter of Dominatrix is an all-important element of ‘Her’ address.

Along with her Dominatrix title and name, she constructs a self in her adopted style, her photographic images and writing in self-expression and self-promotion, in which she may emphasise particular interests and skills, and draws clients into her web.

For the man's part, in making contact with a Dominatrix, attending her playspace and tendering tribute (money), he lays bare his desire, and through his actions has acknowledged the power of the sublime

woman over him. He puts himself in her hands, in a gesture of great trust.

The Dominatrix sits above him in status and power. She may literally sit on a throne chair, emphasising her elevation. As a ritual piece of furniture, the throne dates far back in history – to the seat that Goddesses took in temples and sanctuaries in the Greek and Roman world, and many other cultures around the world. Her appearance plays with regal, reverent, authoritative and spiritual associations, in which the feminine archetypes clang and chime – Noble Lady, Empress, Warriress, Goddess, Queen.

The ritual of a man presenting himself to a Dominatrix – feeling the energy of her power in the room, kneeling vulnerable in front of her, in a manner that subverts established social roles of gender – is sufficient in of itself to cause effects of deep arousal and anticipation in the man submitting. She typically orders the man to strip naked, so that he is made completely vulnerable before her. His arousal on visible display evidences Her power over him.

The Dominatrix tantalises the man. The word ‘tantalise’ is taken from the character of Tantalus in Greek mythology, a man who was punished with ripe fruit dangling just out of reach and in a pool of water that receded when he went to drink it, for all of eternity. The Dominatrix is similarly like ripe fruit just out of his reach; above him, in close proximity that he can smell her, increasing his desire for her ever more.

There are different forms of power that a Dominatrix exploits or emphasises, whether her physical beauty, her womanly curves, her physical strength, her mystical knowledge and ability to intuit his desires and needs better than he, and indeed a cocktail of these constituent ingredients.

The Dominatrix projects her force by way of her animal body language and posturing. When she speaks, it is the voice of dominance (whether loud and imperative, or confidently calm and instructive). When she moves, it is with control of the interplay of closeness and distance, the power of intimacy and the power of longing.

Her heightened status may also be paralleled by height in physical stature, by wearing high-heel stiletto shoes or boots, nullifying or overturning the physical discrepancy between female and male gender height. The shoe is also in of itself a fetish object, with high-heel talon, which the Dominatrix uses to elevated effect.

Whatever she wears or whatever she holds, it is not only in the equipment or attire itself, but the way in which she wears it and possesses it, her confidence and internal strength, wisdom and beauty reflected outwards, therein lies the Dominatrix's power.



Figure 80 Lucina Nathanael, *Venus in Furs* or *Maîtresse Nuit*'s homage to L von Sacher Masoch's *Ideal Woman*, 2013.

A Dominatrix is often referred to as a 'superior woman', possessing alpha characteristics. She stands elevated in hierarchy, looking down upon the submissive male. In all social animals, hierarchy affects behavior, whereby inferior co-members alter their gaze and position in the presence of higher status members, which is an effect that the

Dominatrix uses in her own realm to enforce submission.

The skilled Dominatrix can ascertain the position and status of the male before her; via inspection, questioning, intuition and judgment. She measures him up, physically and psychologically, analysing him and calculating how she will play with him, use him and develop him, and what she perceives he 'needs'.

She holds the man under her spell, in waiting anticipation and in trepidation, in burgeoning desire and devotion of being under female power, authority and wisdom.

Realm 2

The Art of lowering the man to submission

Complimentary to the elevation of the Dominatrix as sublime woman, is the positional lowering of the man, in service and obedience to Her.

There are a number of lower-status roles into which he may be cast, and amongst the most common forms are as a submissive, a servant, sissy-maid or a slave. Each individual's psychology and the interplay with a particular Dominatrix will work through the power dynamics and role relationships that suggest themselves.

Important to note is the see-saw at play, swinging like weights of justice. On one side of the scale, the Dominatrix emphasises the low status of the man. On the other hand, she privileges him, by her attentions and proximity, by investing her energy in training him. By these means, he is a '*privileged slave*'. The art of the Dominatrix is in the handling and balancing of these two elements, of status lowering and proximity privilege.

Some of the methods of lowering the submissive include elements of humiliation – an area that must be carefully and expertly trod, as what is sexually arousing and exciting role-play to some, could be genuinely hurtful and psychologically damaging to another. To what extent and forms she lowers him in status, is a topic for intuition and/or consensual agreement, and the submissive ultimately retains power and consents to his treatment to the degree he can use a 'safe word' ('mercy' or 'red' are commonly used to stop play), or indeed

walk out on her in as far as he is a client.

Using her intuition and communication, she evaluates how far in which direction she can or should push him and play with him. Some things that one individual would adore to perform, for another would be deeply embarrassing to carry out, and for another too difficult, due to different psychology mediated through the effects of upbringing and culturally specific taboos.

On the mild end of the spectrum, she may be gently teasing and taunting, verbally reminding him that he is her 'submissive' or 'slave', needing to obey and prove himself to her. At the more extreme end of the spectrum, a man may be put to very intense power exchange in which he is degraded to a lowly status of contempt, which is suited to those who would find this powerfully erotic and paradoxically enjoyable.

Such play runs along not only individual lines, but also cultural. Any experienced Dominatrix will anecdotally report, and the cliché runs (but some truth lies in it, however politically incorrect), that clients of Indian ethnicity often desire to be in servitude to wash, massage and worship feet, as feet have special association in Hindu culture as being lowly, and subservience is demonstrated by lower castes, or towards those of seniority, gurus, Gods and Goddesses, by touching the feet.

French clients may enjoy 'puppy play' in which they are treated as a poodle or other dog, typically scolded and told off, but lavished attention upon, culturally by women. A common fantasy in England amongst a particular generation is public school role-play, derived from genuine childhood and adolescent experience, to be treated as a schoolboy, scolded and punished by a Head Mistress or Governess figure.

Such desires make up only a small portion of play and subtypes of client profiles, and should not be taken to classify a nation. They do, however, offer insight in the degree to which elements of humiliation are culturally based and inform psychosexual play.

Desire is rarely politically correct in its constitution. It grows in excess upon the fertile ground of the forbidden, the feared, the

shameful and the taboo, in its local soil type. The Dominatrix mediates elements of culture and time travel, drawing echoes of voices and props from the past, into the present. She can sense resonance within her submissive's reactions, eyes, breathing, docility, excitement and arousal.

The lowering and humiliation of the submissive is attendant to reverse-ageing and a kind of infantilism. The Dominatrix positions her submissive below Her to receive instruction and learning (as an apprentice to their Superior, or a child to their mother).

In doing so, she dislodges him from normal everyday life seniority and social roles, a lifting of responsibility and social expectations placed on a man within his culture. Stripped of control and autonomy, his sole purpose becomes receiving, listening, obeying, responding, yielding, sensing, experiencing. He can enjoy the presence of her femininity and sexuality, be aroused and feel himself encased and immersed in her power.

His lowered role into subservience to Her is symbolised by the Dominatrix collaring him, ritualistically, at the start of a session. She may put him in a leather 'gimp hood', which aids depersonalisation of the man into object and slave, achieving a powerful transformative effect.



Figure 81 Lucina Nathanael, *Heel*, 2011. Limited edition photographic print.

Elements of role-play that emphasise the man's lowered position may include 'slave positions', in which he is trained to adopt specific positions of servitude. Kneeling with hands facing upwards on the lap and head lowered, is a common slave position. Another is being positioned on all fours with legs spread, like an animal ready for inspection.

His lowly position may be emphasised by lying him completely prostrate on the floor with hands facing up. The symbolism of the

hand positioning has an historical precedent of showing the hands without a weapon, made vulnerable, demonstrating subservience. In religious ritual, the hands facing upwards towards the heavens (and the Goddess) represent a readiness to receive and experience connection with the divine.

A Dominatrix directs a man to submission not only in his posturing, but in his actions. She may test him by putting him to work on labour of low status (but in connection to her and serving her). She may have her 'lowered man' peel grapes for her, and feed these to her. She may make him keep her and any guests cool by fanning with a large ornate fan, while dressed in slave attire.

She may have him serve her and her friends food or cocktails, or answer the door in a butler costume or other attire. She may objectify him by literally turning him into a piece of furniture to use, such as a human table, or as a human footstool. She may position him in a fixed pose and challenge him to hold himself frozen in the position, as a sculptural piece of art, for display and entertainment.

She may use him as a 'maid', dressed up in apron and attire of her choosing, set to tasks such as cleaning and dusting. She will then inspect his work and adjudicate his performance and appearance. A Dominatrix may have her submissive as a masseuse, setting him to work massaging her shoulders and back, or her feet.

Aside from servitude, the Dominatrix emphasises his inferiority physically, by walking all over him literally, trampling him. Some Dominatrices are able to trample a man in their stilettos, with reduction of their weight by holding onto support, and caution and special knowledge used in the placement of their weight in relation to their submissive's organs and ribcage.

Some submissives even like to be wrestled by a strong Dominatrix, and fantasise about being overpowered by a powerful woman. Using her strength and holds, she forces him to yield, and in doing so she demonstrates her physical superiority over him. The demonstration of her superior strength typically occurs at the beginning of a session, setting the tone for the loser male's submission to the Dominatrix winner.

A Dominatrix may emphasise her superiority in terms of mate selection, by cuckolding her submissive, describing how he's not worthy as a sexual partner to her, and relating her exploits with partners she desires and selects, who may be a strong dominant man referred to as a 'bull'.

Some submissives are aroused by being used as a financial slave and 'money pig' to provide money and gifts for his superior Dominatrix, to win over her attention and affection, her smile and her delight.

Within heavy degradation play, some Dominatrices use a willing and desirous man as 'toilet slave', which would be shocking to many members of the public, but draws power and arousal precisely because of the social unacceptability and taboo. For such slaves it is the ultimate privilege to receive from a Dominatrix's own body in this way. In receiving her spit, or her urine (referred to as a 'golden shower'), and so on, he shares in that which has come from her sacred body's orifices.

Some Dominatrices may also use slaves for their own sensual pleasure, by making them perform 'oral servitude' or to bring her to orgasm. This is not an area that many Dominatrices partake in, due to the intimacy of the act, and in more recent history the concern over sexually transmitted infections had greatly altered the degree and method to which this area of play is engaged on, diminishing its popularity amongst most Dominatrices and increasing use of dental dams (a thin tissue-sized sheet of latex spread over the vulva area), as part of safe sex practices. More commonly, a slave may be ordered to 'worship' a part of the woman's body, and to massage her feet, or kiss her feet, or legs, as she directs.

The submissive may also enjoy having his lowered position emphasised in front of others, or even in public. Some of the 'special events' Dominatrices frequently organise are Dominatrix tea parties, in which a slave may be mocked, ordered around, forced to obey and please multiple Dominatrices, or be forced to interact with each other.

Some slaves like to be publicly humiliated in front of others. Games

may be held such as mock ‘slave auctions’, or ‘Huntress/slave hunting’ (a kind of one-way paintball). Or he may be publicly dominated out shopping, at dinner or in a bar, ordered around and made to drop and worship her foot with kisses.

His subservient position draws erotic frisson from the subversive overthrowing of social norms, and by the display of unwavering devotion to the sublime woman.

Realm 3

The Art of Bondage, Entrapment and Enclosure

Amplifying the power effects upon a submissive, the Dominatrix will frequently use forms of bondage and entrapment – be they physical or psychological in nature.

One of the most ubiquitous symbols of bondage is the slave collar, which the Dominatrix puts onto her client, symbolising transition into bondage. Alongside this, however, the Dominatrix obtains verbal consent of his bondage and obedience to Her.

To be in bondage is not only to be trapped, but to ‘belong’ and ‘be held’. There is a proprietary element to the act of bondage – ‘You are mine now. You belong to (with) me.’

The bondage may be in this sense almost purely psychological and symbolic in form, agreed on and understood by the submissive, and be sufficient to hold and bind him to the Dominatrix and to her realm. Often, however, more intense and restrictive forms of physical and emotional bondage may be used by the Dominatrix (and desired by her client). Fetters may be attached to the man – harnesses, wrist cuffs, ankle cuffs and so forth, in materials as diverse as leather, rubber, rope, silk, iron or chain.

Many forms of bondage are derived from prisoner contexts. Leg irons and heavyweight manacles, which have traditionally been used to keep high-value prisoners in inescapable bondage, have a strong psychological effect, with the solid strength and coldness of iron upon skin. Police and detainee handcuffs may also be used, held under lock and key.

Many Dominatrices also make use of prison cells in which to detain their prisoner, or slave cages, which may be upright, horizontal or shaped in an ornate birdcage style.

One of the most common forms of bondage is leather, which makes up a high proportion of collars and cuffs worn by slaves. Leather straps can be conveniently secured around the man's body, pulled tight and belted – or even locked – into place. Straightjackets are also used, with prisoner and psychiatric associations. A man's arms may be secured behind his back, unable to defend himself and making him more vulnerable, and unable to touch himself.



Figure 82 Nuit d'Or, *Le Noir 9*, 2011. Limited edition photographic print.

Leather can be used to fix a submissive to a piece of furniture or equipment, such as a 'bondage bench' whereby he is laid flat and secured, unable to move; strapped down, seated on an interrogation chair, or kneeling and bent over a spanking bench, or standing with legs spread on a bondage wheel or St Andrew's Cross.

In such bondage, with freedom of movement constricted, the submissive experiences a sense of helplessness and vulnerability, which aids submission, so that he feels he has no choice but to let go and accept his fate at the hands of the Dominatrix, to accept he is completely at her mercy. The Dominatrix is able to inspect every part of him, to toy with him, to apply stimuli in the form of pain or pleasure, and being that he is in bondage, he is unable to stop her. In bondage he accepts he is no longer in control, forced to acquiesce and yield. While entrapped in bondage, he is paradoxically free(d). That is, free to let go of work and family worries, concerns and stresses. Free to focus on the moment, on his psychological and physical responses and experiences.

Some forms of bondage involve what is known as 'sensory deprivation' and encasement, shutting out or limiting input of the senses of sight, smell, hearing and/or touch, creating a cocoon-like effect, recalling the womb environment. One such piece of equipment is a bodybag or sleepsack, typically made out of leather, or in thick-gauge latex rubber. The Dominatrix zips the man into it, from feet to head, and it may also have additional straps to belt around it or secure it to a bench. A leather or rubber hood may be secured over the head, with breathing holes through which the Dominatrix can monitor her submissive's breath, or even control his breath. The man is made bound and helpless, contained within the tight materiality, encasing him like a second skin.

He is free to 'float off' into 'sub-space' – as it is commonly referred. Many report experiencing a sense of deep relaxation and peace beyond anything they've felt before. Latex vac (vacuum) beds are formed by sheets of rubber supported within a frame, so that the air can be sucked out, with a breathing tube for the submissive to breathe through.

Some dungeons are equipped with an elaborately constructed sensory deprivation box or cupboard, with padding, airholes and restraint built into its engineering, to put a submissive into. (It goes without saying that such session types are not suited to those suffering from claustrophobia!)

A Dominatrix may also manipulate the use of encasement bondage, incapacitation and deep submissive states, to combine with suspension. Alternatively ropes bondage and/or suspension may be carried out while the subject's body is otherwise exposed and accessible. In either case, this is a realm in which the high expertise of the Dominatrix particularly comes into play, with associated risk and danger. Experienced Dominatrices mitigate this risk through their knowledge in using extra points of securing to safeguard in the event of any failure of equipment or rope. She may have emergency 'quick release', from whence he can be taken down from suspension with speed if necessary. Often she will ensure another person is present to aid weight-bearing and support, or in case of the client passing out and needing to be brought safely down.

The Dominatrix takes into account pre-existing medical conditions that the client may have, any medications that a person might be on, before agreeing to engage in such activities. She mitigates against foreseeable risks, turning down if necessary a session request she feels is inappropriate and unacceptable in its risk level for an individual. She needs to understand human anatomy and location of nerve endings. She watches closely for signs of circulation being hampered, for coldness in the extremities, listens to the regularity of breathing, and so forth, which requires specialised training in bondage.

There are several forms of ropes bondage, with the Japanese style of ropes bondage (known as *shibari*) utilising an economy of knots in order to maintain efficiency, rapidity and, most of all, spontaneity – in the words of ropes artist Satomi Zpira.² While Western styles of bondage may be aesthetically more complex and involve more complicated knots, she notes.

Ropes bondage has become increasingly recognised as an 'art form' in recent times. Its origins, however, were in ancient Japanese martial

arts of warrior samurais used for capturing and detaining opponents. The martial art of Hojōjutsu, which developed during the Dark Ages of the Sengoku Muromachi period (c. 1467–1600), developed rope bondage techniques that used rope to maim and injure the captor, creating permanent nerve damage (this is no longer the aim of modern bondage, indeed nerve damage is specifically avoided, regarded as reckless, dangerous and sign of a person not knowing what they're doing).³ In its contemporary use, rope bondage has evolved to erotic restraint and pleasure, the psychological and physical enjoyment of being in bondage (for the submissive tied) and in weaving, knotting in aesthetic and rhythmic pleasure (for the person dominating, roping and rigging).

Writer and sex educator Midori, notes that historically the Japanese used bamboo rope because it was abundant, cheap, fast-growing, and suitable for rope-making, whereas leather was a scarce commodity in the island nation of Japan, and metal was not feasible in Japan's middle ages. The rope bondage tradition continued into the Edo period, she notes, as a pragmatic method of criminal/prisoner management, codified with subtle variations of rope colours and methods of tying to reflect the rank of the captured, crime level, and so forth.⁴

Eventually the Japanese entertainment Kabuki theatres – then much bawdier than their modern-day association – would feature sexual imagery (*nureba*) and torment scenes (*seme-ga*), which filtered into *ukiyo-e* artwork – or ‘images of the floating world’ and the art of Seiu Ito. His artwork, influenced by a childhood fascination with fairytales of captive princesses, combined with BDSM interests to create photographic images of captive and punished women, from 1919.⁵ Ito's imagery influenced generations of graphic artists, photographers and ropes artists who followed, ensuring that Japanese rope bondage entered the erotic arena, was absorbed into the theatrical *shibari* performances and suspension shows in bondage clubs, and into the BDSM scene. When the Japanese images of *shibari* ropes bondage entered the Western world, it simultaneously entered the vernacular and practices of the Dominatrix's craft.

Fetish artist John Willie was one of the main figures responsible for the propagation of ropes bondage images into the US through his 'bizarre' artwork and cartoon of 'Sweet Gwendoline' – who inevitably ends up tied-up as a 'damsel-in-distress'.⁶ Irving Klaw responded to his clients' desire for bondage images, producing photographic work featuring the likes of Bettie Page tied-up in bondage. (The actual tying-up was undertaken by Irving's sister, Paula Klaw.)⁷

The client desire to experience ropes bondage scenarios, and Dominatrices' own desires to experiment in this medium, led some to seek out advanced tutoring in *shibari* ropes bondage by travelling to Japan to learn from *nawashi* (bondage Masters), or from classes or tutoring offered by local ropes artists within their BDSM communities. This knowledge was adapted to their own professional dungeon practices, and passed on to other Dominatrices.

Whereas the *nawashi* and ropes artists may practice their craft mastery for demonstration and for performance on typically petite Japanese female models, the Dominatrix's use has some differences to its method and purpose. The Dominatrix works with 'everyday' body types, who may not be accustomed to bondage, and she is dealing with different concerns in terms of safety, tolerance and weight. Her approach may be technical, aesthetic and creative, but her focus is also on the power-play and experience of her submissive being held in ropes as her primary concern; bound and helpless, entrapped in the Dominatrix's 'web', she checks on her subject throughout.

Not all Dominatrices practice *shibari* or ropes bondage, which requires great proficiency and training to practice – she may not have access to expertise to acquire knowledge, or the area may not interest her or she may prefer leather bondage or steel fixings.

Bondage may also be psychological rather than physical. There are a number of niche forms of psychological bondage that clients seek out, including consensual blackmail, binding contracts, erotic hypnosis and mind control.

Typically a client will contact a Dominatrix specifically seeking to be blackmailed, which plays into his erotic fantasy, whereby he deliberately tenders private information about himself that he wants

her to use against him. This may be ‘invented’ (false) information that he has constructed for the psychological battle without actually posing real risk to him, but with the Dominatrix proceeding in the assumption that it is, and both parties playing along. Or it may be real information about him – his real name, where he works, his home phone number – and typically the ‘stakes’ increase in time, as further information which poses greater threat may be handed over to her. The Dominatrix games with the power of blackmail over him, providing a form of bondage to compel him to attend sessions, perform actions, buy her gifts or pay her tribute. For her client it is enormously erotic to feel under psychological control and compulsion of the Dominatrix.

One of the reasons such clients seek out a Dominatrix for such a service of ‘financial domination’ or ‘blackmail’ is that there is usually greater underlying trust in the ethics and professionalism in seeking out an established, well-regarded Dominatrix, as well as her understanding deeply the psychology enjoyed in such game-play. Typically, a blackmail slave seeks an intelligent and sophisticated player, who can develop unexpected twists and turns in the power-play, believable threats of exposure and stimulating challenges to action for Her, leveraged off the blackmail threat.

In erotic hypnosis fantasies, the Dominatrix uses forms of ‘mind control’ as her bondage medium. This includes techniques of deep relaxation, altered states of consciousness and trance states, manipulating the tone and rhythm of her voice, along with suggestion and neuro-linguistic programming techniques, to help get him to act and perform in a manner that She desires. Erotic hypnosis techniques may loosen inhibitions and mental barriers, focus the submissive’s full attention to a task or challenge, and take him to a deeper level of obedience training.

A submissive may also be bound by contractual bondage, in the form of a ‘slave contract’, in which the man signs his acceptance and agreement to his ownership, servitude and service to the Dominatrix, who is also put to responsibilities for her slave by the agreement. The effects of the bondage may be strengthened and legitimised by him

signing in blood, with witnesses present, as part of a contractual bondage ceremony.

One of the interesting things about contractual bondage is how much of it aligns with the social construction of marriage – highlighting, in fact, the ‘bondage’ of marriage. This may bring discomfort to those who are themselves married, in recognising that they have contracted themselves in bondage to another, which the language and symbolism attached to marriage plainly reveals.

Marriage is jokingly talked about as a ‘trap’ or a ‘cage’. Wedding rings are described as ‘the world’s smallest handcuffs’. While the Spanish make play on ‘*esposas*’ – meaning spouse in singular form, and handcuffs in plural form. A man’s bachelor party will often be touted as his ‘last night of freedom’ out with the boys.

Frequently a Dominatrix figure (albeit more commonly a faux-Dominatrix stripper) will be hired for a bachelor party, gaming with notions of freedom, bondage and control. One of the most popular humorous decorations for wedding cakes depicts a groom with a ball and chain attached to his ankle, and a bride triumphantly holding the key. It is interesting, too, that a common honeymoon gift is a pair of pink fluffy handcuffs for the newly-wed couple to ‘play with’ the sexual bondage of their newly formed marriage.

The true motives behind a socialised marriage are glossed over, or sweetly frosted over, by the wedding ceremony ritual. In Western society, the wedding is steeped with make-believe fantasies in flowers, a white dress and multi-tiered cake. Beneath all the frosting, lie desires – for public acknowledgment of commitment, elevated status, contracting of sexual exclusivity upon the other, desire for or legitimisation of children, emotional support, financial support, joint property, avoidance of loneliness – which may only be sketched over or lightly gestured at, and are rarely openly and honestly discussed.

By contrast, the Dominatrix forces honesty upon her slave to lay bare his desires and motives. She constructs the form of bondage and its structure in a manner suited to him, and to Her own desires and willingness to accommodate, laid out honestly and openly.

Negotiation and discussion of boundaries precede or form a part of

the bondage agreement. The contract of slavery sets out the terms of agreement for both parties, the expectations and roles to be played by both, the 'terms of bondage', in an open and direct manner, mutually consented to.

The Dominatrix recognises the double-sided aspect of domination bondage. While it attaches and entraps the submissive, it also binds responsibilities on the dominant party. The bondage places a 'duty of care' upon the Dominatrix, to look after the submissive when he is in states of vulnerability.

Some may be surprised to know that in a significant portion of cases, the wife of a married client is often aware that her husband is seeing a Dominatrix. Wives who know their husband well and intimately are usually conscious of a 'misalignment' of sexual desires within an otherwise happy marriage, and if not wishing to participate or gratify their husband's desires, may be relieved for their husband to attend a professional Dominatrix for this purpose. It may be that she turns a blind eye to it. Or it may be openly discussed and agreed to in consideration of other factors that the wife gains from the arrangement.

A wife may agree to her husband attending a Dominatrix once a month within certain limits, on agreement that she has money for spending on herself, controlling and benefitting from the arrangement. There may also be reassurance of not breaching sexual fidelity of marriage, as Dominatrices do not typically have sex with their clients.

There are cases of wives even meeting to co-conspire with the Dominatrix, planning the husband's punishment or treatment in a session, such as training him to be more attentive to his wife and to help out more with the housework. As Alexandre Dumas wrote, '*Les chaînes du mariage sont si lourdes qu'il faut être deux pour les porter; quelquefois trois.*' (Marriage is a chain so heavy that it takes two people to carry it – sometimes three.)

Notions of sexual fidelity in bondage are also knowingly played with by the Dominatrix (or by Dominant wives) via chastity bondage, whereby the man's genitalia is locked up within a chastity device,

such as a metal ‘cock cage’ or a moulded acrylic perspex device with varying adaptable sizes of base ring to fit. The superior woman naturally holds the keys, seeing that the submissive man is locked up for a period of time until she chooses to release him.

A comment often made by the Dominatrix to another, is ‘if you control the cock, you control the man’. The Dominatrix is accomplished in the arts of controlling the man via tease-and-denial, of restricting a slave’s access to touch himself or to experience an orgasm, unless it pleases her and she directs it so.

This form of control may be emphasised by ‘cock-and-ball ties’, in which the man’s penis and testicles are bound in string or leather, or ‘gates of hell’, with several rings in string or leather wrapping around the penis at intervals along its length. The name ‘gates of hell’ comes about because as the man becomes more aroused, his member engorged, the rings or ‘gates’ become tighter, of his own making. A leather sheath with pins, shoelaced around his penis, also achieves the same, puncturing him only if he is over-aroused.

In denial and mounting frustration, his arousal builds, making him ever more desirous and desperate to please, ensuring She holds him under her power and control.

Realm 4

The Art of Discipline and Punishment

Amongst the best well-known practices of the Dominatrix are discipline and punishment. Within the playspace of the Dominatrix, social norms and law is substituted by the Dominatrix’s own rules and expectations. Her position of power and prerogative rights are emphasised by her authority and discipline impressed upon him, which forms the structure for learning and obedience training.

Punishment can achieve several ends. It demonstrates the Dominatrix’s prerogative rights and power as the authoritarian. It acts as a consequence and deterrent to disobedience, incorrect or inappropriate behavior. It effects retribution, and may also help assuage the submissive’s guilt for letting the Dominatrix and/or

himself down, offering a kind of cathartic release in pain, wiping the slate clean.

Forms of punishment bear resemblance to those utilised in domestic settings, such as by parental figures, or in institutions such as in schools, army and military, and in prisons. Punishment may take the form of removal of privilege, isolation in a corner, cage or cupboard, some form of humiliation or labour, the removal of privileges, or in the form of corporal punishment and pain.

The Dominatrix is particularly associated with issuing corporal punishment as a disciplinarian. It is a form of play that is particularly arousing in some individuals who have internalised fantasies involving punishment rituals from their childhood and adolescence, which were mixed with attraction to a female authority figure who they longed to be in proximity to.

Memories of corporal punishment from youth that 'stick in the mind' are often described as being 'thrilling'. The word 'thrill' means to have a feeling of sudden excitement or pleasure, or a wave of nervous tremor, and is derived from the Middle English term 'thirl', meaning 'to pierce or penetrate'.

The prelude to punishment, and act of punishment itself, flood the body with a cocktail of body chemicals, hormones and endorphins, and an emotional interplay of fear, excitement, trepidation, humiliation and pain. If it is the buttocks that are punished, this brings further a 'taboo' by involving and exposing a usually private part of the body in play, to added psychological effect, and combined with the experience of pain and increased blood-flow to the proximal genital region. The effects are not only those experienced at the time, but the lingering sensations, the psychological processing of the event, and the teasing, intrigue and kudos of social peers around the corporal punishment that was received. 'How many strokes did Miss give you? How hard did she draw it?', as one former schoolboy would relate.



Figure 83 Lucina Nathanael, *Heels and Whip*, 2011. Limited edition photographic print.

Men report vivid memories, in great detail, around childhood and adolescent experiences of discipline involving corporal punishment with teachers, mothers, governesses and other authority figures, and often seek to play similar scenarios out with a Dominatrix. Such sessions will ideally evoke the mood, content, language and ritual of corporal punishment, and elicit a renewed thrill that echoes with earlier experiences and longings, oscillating between the past and the present.

In England in particular, corporal punishment is a particularly popular element that men seek out to roleplay with Dominatrices, who may play the role of Head Mistress, School Teacher, Governess, Strict Aunt, and so forth. Role-plays are particularly sought out by those who were exposed to corporal punishment in a domestic setting or in school. This may involve implements such as the slipper (shoes), paddle strap, wooden ruler, belt or cane. Spanking of the bottom is also frequently used as punishment and/or a prelude or 'warm up' prior to the use of harder implements.

Functionally, the spanking helps prepare the bottom to take greater pain in punishment by increasing blood-flow to the region, associated with a pink 'rosiness'. Dominatrices will sometimes describe the laying down of a 'base coat' before a more serious implement and punishment, such as a cane, is used.

While sensually, spanking involves skin-on-skin contact and a closeness in proximity. An over-the-knee spanking in particular is often deeply arousing because of the intimacy and subversiveness in an adult context, of being laid over a woman's lap, gazing at her legs.

When it comes to implements, there are a large number and type that may be used, and the Dominatrix issues strokes with an awareness and consciousness to their effects, to marking (or avoidance of marks), and with a ritual around their application.

Typically the punishment of a particular number of strokes to be received may be announced, such as six strokes in punishment for an offence. As well as emphasising her judicial authority to decide on the number, it aids the submissive in mentally preparing for his punishment and the number he must get through, making it more 'manageable' for him to endure. Or, if a longer punishment is to be administered, the Dominatrix will commonly work in 'sets' (groups of a dozen, or groups of ten – if working in 'decimals'), followed by a pause, before the next.

She may have him count the strokes and thank her for each stroke, or at the end of each set. And, if she wishes to be kind, the Dominatrix may rub the bottom between sets, or use fake fur side or a feather duster across the sore backside. This seemingly kind treatment

not only soothes and demonstrates caring (in contrast to the harsh punishment), but helps re-sensitise his skin and nerve endings to experience greater sensation, and stimulates the production of endorphins.

Corporal punishment may be administered in the atmosphere of the Dominatrix's dungeon, or in a role-play such as a school punishment scene, where the implements will generally be authentic to what was historically used (i.e. the crooked school cane, ruler, etc.).

In Scotland, the 'tawse' was used by teachers to punish students and to maintain order and authority in classes by its visible presence as a threat. It was formed by a strip of leather divided into two (or more) tails, in tan or dark-brown leather. The most famous maker was J. J. Lochgelly of Fife, and this implement continues to be popular amongst men from Scotland and with Dominatrices who accommodate traditional corporal punishment (or 'CP' as it is commonly abbreviated to).

The ritual and disciplinary elements of corporal punishment may also be played out in contexts other than school scenarios, such as domestic role-plays involving spanking, as well as the use of other implements, such as a wooden hairbrush, wooden spoon, slipper or belt. Common fantasies are those that are regressive in nature, such as playing a boy caught masturbating and punished in a 'Freudian context' by his mother, aunt or governess, or disciplined for not doing homework, and so on.

Other fantasies bring corporal punishment into the contemporary adulthood present, such as a female employer 'boss' bringing a male employee into account for inappropriate behavior, such as sexual harassment or lack of respect for female colleagues or employees – which sets up a flavor of enforcing respect for women. Other reasons for punishment may be continual lateness to work, a major error being made, the misappropriation of funds, corporate espionage for a competitor, and so forth, in which the man is threatened with either being fired, reported to the authorities and exposed. The alternative is subjecting himself to Her unorthodox regime of discipline and corporal punishment, restoring an old traditional practice, which of

course he is forced to accept.

Institutional themes and regimes of discipline also appear frequently cross-culturally, including prison scenarios or being given the cat-o'-nine-tails on a ship taken over by female pirates. Another fantasy association with female domination is of a man being shipwrecked on an island inhabited by Amazonian women, who use corporal punishment to keep a male slave force in obedience and labour.

One rare but consistently encountered specialisation of corporal punishment, which is set apart in its harshness and severity, is referred to as 'judicial punishment'. Typically such a judicial punishment is specifically sought and requested by a client, who contacts the Dominatrix, and will outline in script his desire for such a session; which needs to be as authentic, accurate and well-executed as possible, to meet his needs. Unlike normal sessions, it is common if he is experienced that he requests 'no mercy' – the removal of a safe word, which would normally govern sessions. He wants the Dominatrix to see out the full punishment no matter what he says or screams out to her, with inevitability of the full punishment, its inescapability and realism. The 'judicial punishment' is typically staged as a 'special event', planned and anticipated in advance, which is part of the excitement and psychological preparation, and often with additional attendees (such as the Domiatrrix's friends or colleagues who are requested to attend) providing a 'public spectacle' element to the judicial punishment.

Ritually, the judicial punishment involves two parts. First, the judgment and sentencing, in which the crime is read out, and the method and number of punishment strokes announced. Second, the man is brought back in to receive the punishment. Temporally these are as two separate events, and may involve being put into a cell or manacles and chains in between, in a different room, for a period of time.

The sentence (usually pre-agreed 'out of session' communication in advance of the day) may be, for example, 100 strokes administered with a dragon cane. It is a very serious punishment, involving a high

level of physical pain, and must be seen as an 'ordeal' to endure. Such sessions of judicial punishment are much rarer than other types of sessions, and are a particular niche request, but are worth outlining in contrast to others.

The talent of a Dominatrix is in her professional ability and skill to wield an implement such as a dragon cane, 'straight and true', and bring it down with confidence and force to a 'judicial' level. She is tested in her competence as much so as her prisoner/criminal is being tested in his endurance. It is in this sense a 'peak experience' for both, for the Dominatrix achieving a brilliantly executed caning of so many strokes, and for the man, in taking it. The event, typically attended by others, and being spectacle, is relived in memory and fantasy for a long time into the future by the receiver. As one Dominatrix put it, 'He does it once, pays the price, and gets his kicks off of the memory for a good five years'.

Such fantasies contain elements of masochism. The term 'masochism' was used by the Austrian psychiatrist Krafft-Ebing in *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), and was derived from the name of the author Leopold van Sacher Masoch, who wrote *Venus in Furs* (1870) (about a man's desire for, and relationship with, a dominant woman wearing furs who would whip him). The term 'masochism' is in this way a psychiatric term for a fantasy in fiction that its author shared in real life. Frequently a masochist wants to be punished by a cold desirous woman, so the story perpetuates. Her 'coldness' lies not only in her ability to mercilessly punish the man, but in her seeming obliviousness to his burning desire for her. (She is desirous to him, but She does not demonstrate desire for him, thus she is 'cold'.)

It could be argued that in punishing him violently, her violence demonstrates passion. She remains stern, able to punish him violently, and enjoys herself doing it. This is what the masochist seeks, being punished by a cold beautiful woman who enjoys herself punishing him. In receiving the punishment, he can lose himself in objectification, to Her. He takes from her passion and enjoyment that he means something to Her – for you have to care enough about someone to be bothered in spending energy and labour to punish

someone. The more violently she punishes, he takes pride in bringing such veracity out in her, and in her enjoyment enacted upon him. Her strokes of the whip or cane (etc.) upon him are an extension of her hand. A masochist doesn't merely want pain; he wants invested exertion of pain upon him.

An amusing part of the interplay between Dominatrix and masochist, is that typically the masochist attempts to stipulate many details and specifics of how he wants his punishment. This takes away from the Dominatrix's enjoyment in dominating, whereby she would ordinarily create and control the punishment in a direction that she desires and sees fit (albeit within negotiated boundaries).

Dominatrices often complain about how controlling masochists are. 'He wants me to hurt him coldly, and enjoy myself doing it, but he wants me to hurt him the way *he* wants, only this way, this hard, this many strokes, no not like that, wearing this type of attire.'

While in this sense there is a clash of control, between the masochist and Dominatrix, where they align and come to union is in their mutual absorption and interest in the aestheticism, beauty, staging, craft and execution of the punishment. The Dominatrix enjoys the creative challenge and the opportunity to use her craft talents and expert technique. While the masochist enjoys the gratification of the carefully detailed and theatrical power-play and punishment seen out, just so, to fulfill his fantasy in mind.

A masochist will, however, often critique a session, in a way that no other type of client (submissive) would dare, and express frustration with any small detail that is not as he envisaged, in turn annoying the Dominatrix, a situation that can be quite amusing to reflect upon as a battle.

Masochist: 'Now that was a good session overall, but I would like you to have more eye make-up, and hold your gaze longer in the mirror reflected when you look at me, and then when you beat me I want you to do it more like ...'

Dominatrix: [interrupting him] 'I'm the Mistress and I want to punish the way I'm in the mood to, not the way you dictate me to according to your rules. You wanted me to wear leather and to beat you hard and enjoy myself,

and that's what I did! Stop trying to top from the bottom, and be grateful! You want to be my slave, then you need to be more submissive and humble.'

Masochist: 'I am grateful and humble. You're beautiful, wonderful, oh the look in your eyes – delicious! It's just that if you could be more lingering in your gaze, pause and then ...' (He is cut off by the Dominatrix shoos him out the door, followed by frustration on both sides, softening to mutual fondness on both sides, leading eventually to a compromise and the scheduling of another session.)

A masochist may call himself a 'slave' to the Mistress, and aspire to be bonded formally within in a slave contract, but a Dominatrix will say he fails at being a 'true slave' because ultimately he likes to try and control the fantasy. He wants to be at the Dominatrix's mercy – but in the way he fantasises of it. For this reason Dominatrices make a particular distinction in describing a client as a masochist slave, as opposed to a submissive or 'true slave'.

'Masochism' is often joined to 'sadism' – as in the term 'sado-masochism', as if the two were a natural pair. They are in fact two different species and not necessarily totally compatible or complimentary, for reasons to be outlined.

'Sadism' was a term taken by Krafft-Ebing from the author the Marquis de Sade, who derived libertine pleasure from inflicting pain. The true sadist takes his pleasure in the absolute power and dominance of inflicting pain on an *unwilling* victim.

A joke within the lifestyle scene of people who practice BDSM, goes as follows: A masochist walks up to a sadist dominant, and says, 'Punish me, hurt me, I want to be hurt!'. The sadist looks at him and answers him – 'No!'.

The butt of the joke (excuse the pun) is that the sadist derives his pleasure from hurting an *unwilling* victim, and in the case of a masochist who wants the pain, the sadist derives the greater pleasure from the power in denying the masochist and choosing not to punish him, in turn frustrating (and in this way hurting) the masochist.

Some of these issues are discussed in Gilles Deleuze's essay on 'Coldness and Cruelty',⁸ however, the addition of the professional Dominatrix's craft interests is an extra facet that has not been

explored.

The part of the 'sadist' to which the professional Dominatrix may be true to – is in taking pleasure in moments of absolute power. However, these are 'moments' (or minutes) because the Dominatrix in her professional mode is simultaneously absorbed and drawn back to care, ethics, duty, empathy, monitoring and 'checking in with' her submissive, poised to stop and attend him if he gets into trouble in any way. Indeed being empathetic and intuitively reading and relating to her submissive client's desires, and knowing where a client 'is' in his level of pain, is part of what makes a good Dominatrix.

For this reason, it is rare to find a truly 'sadistic' Dominatrix, and much more common to find a Dominatrix who has a 'sadistic streak'. That is, she enjoys 'feeding off' fleeting periods in which she can revel in feeling absolute power and sadistic enjoyment. She may market herself as – and pretend to be – a 'pure sadist', for the perceived commercial appeal. What she really means is that she is capable of hurting a submissive to quite a high extent, if that is what he seeks, without flinching, and enjoy herself doing so.

A 'true sadist', however, would want her victims unwilling, and would want to punish them in ways and to levels that they *didn't* want, without stopping to worry about their safety (which wouldn't see her stay in business for long). And indeed most Dominatrices have equal parts of sadism and empathy, embodied by the 'devil' and the 'angel'.

After all this talk of masochist and sadist tendencies, and the more extreme end of the spectrum of play intensity, it should be emphasised that the many sessions only have what could be deemed as a 'mild to medium' level of pain. Some sessions between a Dominatrix and her client even have little to no pain. Punishment may take other forms such as chastisement and removal of privileges, humiliation or labour – as the Dominatrix's invented consequence for a submissive's misdemeanours.

Punishment may also be used only symbolically, or to ritual effect, as in a role-play in which the cane strokes given are literally taps, pretending a punishment has taken place. The idea of punishment can

also be used as a pretence to sensual treatment, such as a mild and sensual spanking, for pleasure rather than pain.

A Dominatrix may also punish due to her desire on the day, to use her slave (in a way he enjoys because he likes to please) in order to relieve her stresses and as an outlet – in a controlled and responsible manner ideally. Or to punish her slave as a ‘peak experience’, whereby she is seeking to drive him into a deep level of submissive state, ecstasy and endorphin rush.

Physical punishment is not a necessary element for all sessions (or clients to receive), and it is often enough for her submissive to know she *could* punish, in order to help further maintain her authority.

As schoolteachers in Scotland would find – having a tawse across their shoulder visibly within eye-sight, was often sufficient to maintain authority and obedience by itself, without the need to necessarily wield it (unless ‘necessitated’ by bad behavior).

Dominatrices also use implements such as a riding crop as a part of correction and training on men. Behaviour modification and discipline training bears a close similarity to the methodology of training other social animals. Within relationships and marriage, the training of men is frequently related to in terms of training him to help out with domestic chores, or training him to leave the (toilet) ‘seat down’. Women who take a more dominant role than what is socially normative, may be knowingly said to be one who ‘wears the pants within the relationship’, or that ‘she has him pussy-whipped’.

Due to Darwinian differences in genders and their alternative evolutionary strategies at work (as well as hormonal differences and drives, and social roles), women are in a particularly powerful position to leverage training off men’s desires, and do so consciously and unconsciously in human society. Indeed some evolutionists believe greater male investment and provision was leveraged off ‘sex strikes’ to mobilise men to hunt and provide important protein for the increasing size of the human fetus’ brain, and to the females upon whom the young are so dearly dependent for a prolonged period of time and learning development, compared with other animal species.⁹

Popular jokes and stereotypes play on men’s preparedness to alter

his behavior when in pursuit of a desired woman. In Alexandre Dumas's book, *The Mohicans of Paris*, an expression is coined – ‘*Cherchez la femme!*’ (Look for the woman!). Or in other words, if a man is behaving strangely – look for there to be a lady or Mistress behind his altered behavior. There will be a woman whom he seeks to impress through acts of effort that are non-characteristic of his everyday personality and patterns.

Mobilising men's efforts and preparedness to change their behavior when in pursuit of a woman's affections (and gratification), is a large component of what the Dominatrix works with in training him. By degrees of tease-and-denial, she controls him, and keeps his efforts to perform and please her refuelled anew with his lust. She is an expert in degrees of partial gratification, amplifying the effect of the smallest touch, the bestowing of permission to kiss the toe of her shoe, or the hem of her seamed stocking.

Many Dominatrices ultimately get their ‘Cruel Mistress’ title not merely from the pain they are capable of inflicting should they wish to, but from the way they deny their submissive his gratification, despite his intense longing. As with Pavlovian dog training, Her presence has him salivating, anticipating the morsels that she throws to him. She, however, leaves him longing, and wanting more.

Realm 5

The Art of Manipulating the Bodily and the ‘Out-of-Body’

Some of the expert crafts the Dominatrix learns through apprenticeship and training pertain to areas of sensory play, simulated ‘torture’, medical play and anal play. There is a deeply bodily and corporeal aspect to much dungeon ‘play’, to the positioning of the body on various pieces of equipment, and its subjection to examination and intervention. This accounts for much of the ‘mysterious’ equipment in her dungeon and medical-room shelves and cabinet.

The equipment and its uses draw from an eclectic range of sources,

including modern and vintage medical equipment and devices, electro-sex-stimulation power boxes and attachments, Violet wands, light and sound machines, nipple clamps, urethral sounds, dildos and anal plugs, sterile disposable needles, medical latex gloves, catheters, alcohol swabs, large boxes of pegs, candles for wax play, ice machine – the list goes on.

There are several motives and aims at play in using such equipment, in addition to masochistic desires already mentioned (see preceding section on corporal punishment).

Firstly, pain exerted by the Dominatrix emphasises the man's vulnerable and helpless state, aiding his state of submission. He can let go of worldly concerns and stresses and be pulled sharply into focus and fear, and into the moment with his Dominatrix. While simultaneously it evidences the Dominatrix's power over him, to violate normal boundaries, to inflict pain, indeed his life being in her hands (and trust), in his corporeal and vulnerable state, escalating the power exchange between them.

Second, there is an element of sensory play, of experiencing different types of sensations on the body, whether it be pinpricks of a Wartenberg wheel, hot wax dripped from a controlled height, use of ice cubes on the body, a feather, electrics, insertions, and so on. These serve to push a man into a passive experiential and submissive/receptive mode, taking and experiencing what the Dominatrix is effecting upon him.

Third, the combination of fear and bodily threat elicits a variety of hormonal and biochemical responses within the body. This includes the activation of the nervous system (intended to bring the body to fear, fight, flight response) with cortisol and adrenaline, and endorphins (endogenous morphine), bringing about feelings of experiencing a 'rush', as it is frequently described. The biochemical response combined with the psychological submission and fear elements of such play, can combine to send a man into what is referred to as a deep 'submissive space' – often abbreviated to 'sub-space'. Whereby common reports from the person afterwards are of feeling as though they were 'floating' or 'flying', or as if they were

leaving or outside of their body, bringing about a state of euphoria and happiness. These effects can be quite long-lingering, depending on the individual and type of play, and often time is needed afterwards for the submissive to 'come back down to earth', or to 'peel themselves back off the ceiling' as one submissive described it.



Figure 84 Nuit d'Or, *Suspended Animation*, 2011. Limited edition photographic print.

In this regard, the Dominatrix's art has correlations with the traditional knowledge of the shaman, who from ancient times practiced knowledge of inducing ecstatic journeying, described as ascension or flight. Some Dominatrices are more involved in this area

than others, and the effects may be amplified by other techniques of sensory deprivation or sensory overload, and musical rhythm used in conjunction.

Each Dominatrix has her own particular interests in relation to equipment and techniques she likes to use. Some enjoy use of 'electro-sex' boxes, with conductible rubber rings and insertables, and increase the electrical current in a controlled and precise manner. Some enjoy 'play piercing' – inserting disposable sterile needles into and sideways, and out, within the upper epidermal skin layers, stimulating nerve endings, for which they will often possess a piercing or tattooists' training or license. (These are not stab piercings, and should *not* be experimented on by someone who doesn't know what they are doing, due to risks of an incompetent person hitting an organ or artery, as well as blood-borne infections and viruses. This should be done correctly with sterile equipment, sterile alcohol swabbing, medical gloves, needles properly disposed of in a sharps bin, and wound dressing gauze, etc. It is also important to know if the person is on blood thinners or other medication, or is a haemophiliac – which would bar against such play.)

Aside from the controlled pain potential of her specialised equipment, there is also an emphasis on the corporeal – bodily – including medical items and techniques. These include the administration of enemas, to flush out the rectum and colon with water, which can be put to an erotic effect, as well as enhanced submission. Some Dominatrices are also trained in using urethral sounds – sterilised and used with medical lubricant sachet to enter the urethra, using the aid of gravity (rather than force) to sound the urethra with increasing size sounds, until a maximum width size of sound is reached. Some use urinary catheters to empty urine from the bladder.

A surprisingly high number of Dominatrices have a nursing background or medical training of some kind, in addition to their dungeon apprenticeships.

Nipple torture (abbreviated to 'NT') or nipple play, in its milder form, is a popular area for many clients – and Dominatrices. Aside

from the propensity to apply pain easily by clamping or twisting the nipples, the stimulation of the nipple can bring increased sexual arousal. These effects of nipple play are anecdotally reported to increase in men with age, with many reporting greater pleasure upon stimulation of this erogenous area.

Anal play is a popular activity for many men due to their biological make-up, with prostate stimulation achieving erotic effect. This may include the Dominatrix using a medical device such as an anal speculum to carefully stretch and widen the rectum, or, using medical gloves, she may engage in anal fingering, inserting increasing numbers of fingers, and even – fisting. Alternatively, sterilised insertables with latex condoms may be used to similar purpose, including dildos, vibrators, or ‘strap-on’ dildos in which a harness is worn by the Dominatrix to actively penetrate the submissive. Such experiences may combine pleasure and pain, as well as feeling psychologically aflush with the feeling of submissiveness and ‘sluttiness’, interfacing with feelings of shame or taboo from social and cultural upbringing.

Gags may be used to fill the mouth and muffle sound and protestation, enhancing submission enjoyment. There are a large number of mouth gags – including ball gags, bit bags and dental gags. Due to the risk of potential problems with breathing, a Dominatrix ensures she can swiftly remove the gag if needed, and doesn’t leave a submissive unattended while he has a gag in his mouth, or is in bondage. If his ability to communicate his safe word is impeded by a gag, the Dominatrix allocates an alternative hand gesture or some other means of communicating that he is at a limit or in trouble. By these means, there is an intimate connection and trust between Dominatrix and submissive. Gas masks and forms of breath control may also be used by an experienced Dominatrix to enhance control over and awareness of his breath.

The range and areas of equipment and techniques that a Dominatrix may incorporate are vast, individual, and continuously being added to by new inventions or adaptations. It is stimulating for both client and Dominatrix for her to ‘play’ with new ideas,

combinations and equipment, in a controlled, trained and risk-aware manner. These types of activities, which are typically combined with other related realms – such as psychological domination, restraint, role-play, fetish, and so on – often develop into heightened experiences of ‘submissive space’, physical highs, and altered states of consciousness, such as trance states and ecstatic states.

The submissive often enjoys the sense of the corporeal, and of being brought to focus on bodiliness and bodily sensation. There may also be a regressive element at work, with the helplessness of a newborn baby or infant, reliant on a powerful female figure to attend to its body and survival. This element at its most explicit may see a client request the sensation of being put in nappies, or some other element of ‘adult baby play’. Even without such a specific interest, however, there is a sense of freedom and peace that can come from experiencing focus on bodiliness and body consciousness.

The intensity of what a submissive may go through with powerfully executed sessions on the part of the Dominatrix, interweaving her skills and timing to full effect, is comparable to what is generally described as a ‘peak experience’. A spiritual dimension is often ascribed, of feeling as if journeying in the heavens, and a strong intimate bond is formed with the Dominatrix who acts as guide through this process.

For the Dominatrix herself, it is a special kind of magical feeling to be able to instigate such sessions and experiences with her talents, and deeply gratifying to be present with the person in their vulnerability and journey.

Some of the deeper sessions may characteristically involve more time, and ‘aftercare’ given to helping the person come back down to earth afterwards. Such deep sessions require greater financial and time investment on the part of the client. It is a tribute to her art form and its appreciation by her clients, that such experiences are made possible.

Realm 6

The Art of Cross-Dress, Transformation and Gender Subversion

Cross-dressing and gender subversion are arguably the most commonly misunderstood areas of the Dominatrix's arts and expertise. Part of the reason that it is so misunderstood is that there are many, many identities – in terms of title, role, gender identification, level and extent of cross-dressing and transformation, and so on.

These include – those who identify as a 'sissy', a 'sissy-maid', a 'sissy-slut', a 'cross-dresser', a 'girl', a 'lady', a 'transvestite' (or 'TV' for short), a 'transgender', a 'drag queen', a 'lover of women's clothing', an 'androgynous', a 'eunuch', a 'lady-boy', a 'slut', or a 'forced feminisation slave'. Some may identify with strictly one of these only, while others may identify with multiple titles and categories.

The Dominatrix provides a 'safe place' for individuals to be able to explore cross-dressing, sissification and different gender identification, in a caring and understanding way. A person may not feel they can comfortably explore their desire or identity, to cross-dress or wear feminine clothes, due to a perception that it will be seen as wrong, or stigmatised and badly judged by the society that they live in, their family, girlfriend, wife, children, parents, work colleagues and neighbours.



Figure 85 Lucina Nathanael, *Intimacy*, 2011. Limited edition photographic print.

An individual client may want to explore cross-dressing and learn how to put on make-up, choose women's clothes that suit them, along with a wig, in a safe environment. Some Dominatrices even have backgrounds in make-up artistry or have taken training to advance their skills in professional makeovers. The client enjoys seeing themselves transformed in the mirror, before their eyes, becoming feminine, with some adopting a female identity and name. The Dominatrix is able to teach them how to put on make-up, either in an older-sister like role or in a strong Dominatrix role, depending on the individual. She can also teach deportment, how to walk in high heels

– whether very elegantly as ‘a lady’, or whether in a ‘slutty’ manner, depending on the individual. The attire may be very refined and ladylike, or sexually provocative and ‘slutty’.

Some cross-dressers seek to ‘pass as’ a woman in public by undergoing a full transformation that is as realistic as possible. This will typically include carefully applied make-up to cover chin shadow, along with a wig in a popular women’s hairstyle. They will be dressed in ‘everyday-looking’ women’s clothes, lingerie, breast fillers (often referred to as ‘chicken fillets’ due to their shape and texture, which fit into a woman’s bra to mimic breasts) and hosiery. The look is finished off with classic women’s shoes (in a larger size to fit). The aim is thus to blend in to a female role as much as possible, to ‘pass’ as – to be ‘taken’ as – a woman.

Others identify as a ‘TV’ (transvestite), and want to be seen as a man who is dressed as a woman. Typically they will relish the exhibitionism of cross-dressing, wearing exaggerated make-up with bold lipliner, dramatic false eyelashes and eye make-up, and big hair with stiletto heels or boots. They will often want to fraternise with other TVs, and enjoy socialising and attending parties as a TV. Often they will adopt a ‘showgirl’ name, or a name that is dramatic or glamorous, or even a feminised version of a man’s name.

One of the other distinctive roles that Dominatrices often facilitate is the client who identifies as a ‘sissy’, in a feminised and submissive role. One of the staples of the Dominatrix’s wardrobe for her clients is a ‘sissy-maid’ outfit, which is a fantasy adaption of the classic French-maid uniform. It may be black and white (traditional), or made in pink or pastel yellow, with lots of exaggerated frills, skirt layers and lace trimming. The sissy-maid will usually also wear frilly panties, be given a very feminine name, and sent to clean or dust with a feather duster, make cups of tea and other maid-like duties. The sissy-maid will be scolded by the Dominatrix for doing things incorrectly, or for looking too slutty, or, to the contrary, may be admired, taught to curtsy and other acts that emphasise subservience and the sissy-maid role. The sissy-maid is addressed as ‘she’ and with an adopted feminine name.

There can be enormous relief in the removal of heavy gender imposition, of hypermasculinisation, and it is interesting that army personnel so frequently seek out cross-dressing when on military leave. This may well be due to the artificially hypermasculine environment, from which they seek rebalancing in the feminine space, wanting to be put in frilly pink attire in a feminine boudoir environment. Monique von Cleef, the well-known Dominatrix, also noted how frequently engineers seek out cross-dressing or transvestite transformations, which may be for a similar reason.

Aside from cross-dressing and sissy identities is the pure carnivalesque and subversive 'gender-fuck' of the Dominatrix's realm arts. As part of female domination, a Dominatrix may demonstrate her control and power over a man by forcing him to wear elements of female attire, such as putting him in lace or satin women's lingerie, or high-heel shoes. She may paint his nipples with lipstick to rouge them, along with his lips, in an act of intimacy and subversion of gender roles. The message here is: 'I control you, and I can do whatever I want with you. You are in my environment now, on my rules.' In doing so, the Dominatrix plays with taboo and ritualistically removing her client from the realm of the everyday world, and through this she dislodges him from his fixed social norms.

The client may be given elements of the feminine, rather than made completely feminine, so that the feminine elements coexist alongside his male identity, making him a kind of androgyne. There is a deep rebalancing in such gender-play. In Taoism and tantra, the masculine and feminine elements are 'yin and yang', and mixed in union create balance in the universe. Every individual may have elements of both genders within them, in their personality and attributes. Society, however, imposes an artificial binary allegiance to a fixed gender identification and compliance with its attendant gender role. The Dominatrix defies the social rules and artificial norms imposed on individuals by mixing attributes and revealing both in her alchemy. No part of social gender identity need be carried on in her space. An individual is free to consider their sexual and gender identity and role afresh, the weight of their socially expected role lifted off them.

The Dominatrix role is itself an identity that combines female and male social attributes and attire. Although women have been enabled to wear trousers or pants for more than the last century, prior to this women were attired in dresses and corsets – trousers were men's attire. The leather trousers often worn by a Dominatrix, paired with a powerful and 'hard look' (implying punishment), could be said to lean towards what was traditionally a masculine social role. Wearing a 'strap-on', she further adopts the male appendage as phallus, secured by harness on her body. To contrast, the Dominatrix's lipstick and make-up, her attire, such as corset, lingerie, stockings, high heels and body-hugging clothing that show her curves, emphasise her feminised form. Indeed the powerful woman has historically challenged traditional gender roles in which women were to be submissive and obedient. One can list strong women in history and mythology who were identified for subverting social expectations of a woman's role – such as Margaret Thatcher (the 'Iron Lady'), Virginia Woolf, Joan of Arc, and so on.

Part of the Dominatrix's play may also include the sexual domination of her submissive by use of her strap-on, in which she penetrates her client anally. Making her submissive 'the bottom', she forces him into the submissive role, experiencing penetration that is typically a large element of the woman's sexual experience in social norms – 'to be fucked'.

The construction of the male anatomy means that the prostate can be stimulated in a way that is pleasurable (the spot often referred to as the 'male G-spot') via penetration and insertion of a dildo. The Dominatrix is also typically proficient at adorning herself in rubber gloves and digitally penetrating her submissive with her fingers. She may even build him up to take a 'fisting' – in which the hand is not generally positioned as a clenched fist, but instead the fingers left in extension brought together in a bunch, for insertion of all four fingers and thumb. This is achieved with careful training and a lot of suitable lubricant to avoid tearing the anal passage.

In some countries, 'poppers' or 'aromas' (alkyl nitrites, sold in vials at sex shops) are used to relax the anal sphincter muscles for anal

play. Legality of poppers varies by country. The effects typically last for a few minutes, increasing feelings of arousal and submission, alongside light-headedness. (Medical advice recommends that they not be used alongside drugs such as Viagra (Sildenafil) or other vasodilators, due to interaction, which could lead to a decrease in blood pressure and, in rare instances, to stroke or heart attack. They are popular also in ‘gay culture’.¹⁰) This book does *not* endorse the use of poppers, which may increase risk and not be legal in some countries, but merely outlines the realities, for the historical record, of their use by some clients of Dominatrices (and in private consensual BDSM play).

Due to the social stigma of a man being cross-dressed and receiving anal penetration, some clients like to be *forcibly* cross-dressed by the Dominatrix, and forcibly penetrated while secured in bondage and made helpless. The ‘forced feminisation’ enables the client to disavow responsibility for their desire, by which they are purportedly ‘forced into it’.

Another type of play requested by some submissives is ‘forced bi-play’, meaning forced bisexual interaction with other males. This type of play enables a bisexual or homosexual individual to explore their desire in a safe and supervised environment, and in a manner that their psychological discomfort, sexual repression and guilt from their social upbringing is alleviated by being supposedly ‘forced’ to carry out play by the Dominatrix. The submissive can thus claim, ‘I did it because she ordered me to’. Alternatively, activities that a submissive would not willingly engage in, but pushes themselves to undertake, can be evidence in proof of their total and absolute submission and obedience to their Mistress.

The Dominatrix provides an ‘unfettered’ openness to gender and sexuality identifications and play, in which her clients may be loosened from the imposition and weight of male/female social-role binaries and normatives, and liberated to explore their own identity and desire within a safe environment.

Realm 7

The Art of Fetish and Fantasy

Virtually all sessions are driven ultimately by a play on fetish and fantasy.

A fetish is something enchanting and bewitching, into which power is invested – and can be touched. More specifically, an erotic fetish is something that a person is aroused by and values highly, in a manner that seems like an over-investment to others: ‘I know it’s only a foot / stocking / rubber skirt ... but all the same, for me it has this power.’ (As Octave Mannoni theorised, ‘*Je sais bien, mais quand-même*’.)¹¹

Some of the most common fetishes of materiality are shiny rubber latex or leather clothing. These become like skin, a second skin. Fur is also a popular fetish (made famous in Von Sacher Masoch’s book, *Venus in Furs*), as is cashmere – both are part of the animal’s coat – with qualities of softness, texture and bodily warmth.

Foot fetish is enormously common, although its specificities differ: some like caressing and kissing the shoe and stiletto, others like stockinged feet. Some like naked clean feet, others are thrilled by the idea of dirty feet that have walked through dirt, or sweaty feet that have been cramped up in shoes all day, walking around getting hot and smelly.

A fetish is not only an object, but may be a story with dramatic punctuation – a fantasy that has sensory punctuation as its sharp (arresting) shock. For example, a fantasy role-play may involve a story that climaxes with the cane across the bottom (for a cane fetishist), the application of heat or being burnt (for a heat fetishist), being pinched on the arm (for a pinching fetishist) or having balloons popped against the body (for a rubber balloon fetishist). In all such cases, it is not merely the thing-as-object upon which the fetish is based (the cane, the hot iron, the woman’s fingers, the balloon), but its ‘portage’ – the wearing and wielding, held within a narrative drawing ever close, and punctuated at its climax with lingering after-effects, and retelling again and again.





Figure 86A and 86B Natasha Gornik, *Domme Jaguar and couple*.
Limited edition photographic print.

The verbal language that the Dominatrix employs around the fetish plays on anticipation, and lingers around the idea and qualities of the fetish, developing upon its magic with a narrative of power, and directing vision and touch.

People who don't relate to a fetish can be completely baffled by how someone can be so engrossed and absorbed in a thing. Fetishes, however, abound to everything in life we give disproportionate investment (time and money), which we attend upon and adoringly hold. The autographed baseball or cricket bat, bought at auction, hanging on the wall displayed, and gazed at, the story of the game and player told around it. The religious relic, attached to memory of a saint, elevated and treasured. All of these things are just 'things', their status comes from the power they hold over us psychically and magically, and the power we invest in them in return. A person may argue in response that they don't get aroused by their sports memorabilia or their religious relic (or the car they spend all weekend buffing up). This may be true, and I would clarify these as 'fixation fetishes' rather than sexual fetishes, but point to the

similarity of structure, materiality, elevation and *overinvestment*, which reveal the power it holds over them and which they invest in it.

There are several 'causes' of fetishes that can be deconstructed. These are substitution, classical conditioning, imprinting and neuronal cross-links in the brain's structure, much of which can occur at a young age and often pre-adolescence.

Sigmund Freud's theory proposes that 'the fetish is substitute for the phallus', in which fetish formation is linked to the infant boy's processing of the lack of his mother's penis, and disavows his perception. He substitutes the fetish as a 'token over the threat of castration and a protection against it.'

While some fetishes may well be traced back in such a way to substitution, I remain unconvinced by the phallocentric summarising of all fetishes as phallus substitution.

Fetishes are not necessarily brought about by the same process structure or age or stage of development. One can 'create' a mild fetish in a person via classical conditioning and association, which suggests that the same processes may also be at play in earlier fetishes.

Classical conditioning involves the association of one thing in presence to (and linked with) another. The famous experiment on this is referred to as 'Pavlov's Dog', experiments in which he rang a bell before presenting dogs with food. In time, the dogs came to be conditioned to associate the bell's ring with food about to be presented, and so would salivate at the sound of the bell in anticipation of food. If an object were connected to and associated with a 'thing', particularly if that structure of gratification and object were repeated, the object becomes a trigger for stimulating anticipatory sexual arousal (equivalent to dogs salivating in anticipation of food), and by these means becomes 'a fetish'.

There have been submissive men who have become particularly attached to their Dominatrix, and when she retires they want the next new Dominatrix they visit for sessions to wear a wig replicating Her hairstyle, the same choker necklace, or shoes, or gloves that their

retired Dominatrix used to wear. When the article is put on by the new Dominatrix, it has an immediate power and arousing effect on them. Interestingly this shows the elements of attachment, associative conditioning, transition and substitution, which are being played out and played with.

A fetish is often described as 'kink', and someone who has a fetish (or fetishes) is described as 'kinky'. This is an apt and intuitive metaphorical description of what may in some cases involve neuronal 'cross-wiring' and 'cross-talk' in the brain's circuitry. The well-known neuroscientist Vilayaner Subramanian Ramachandran has proposed that, as part of the brain's cortex associated with the 'map of the foot' lies beside the 'map of the genital region', the frequency of a foot fetish amongst the population may bear some relationship to the proximity and cross-talk between these neighbouring areas within the brain's structure.¹²

Men are far more frequently reported to have fetishes than women, which may not be due to what Freud believed (to the maternal phallus disavowal), but rather to the differing brain structures of male and female in respect of grey matter and white matter. Many may find it interesting that while the 1990s school education slogan of 'women can do anything' (which emphasised gender equality implying *sameness* of intelligence and brain), this simultaneously downplayed differences in the human brain, its structure and processing between males and females. Women have on average far more white matter in their brain (ten times more than men) and more tightly packed neurons, while men have more grey matter (6.5 times as much as women). More scientific research needs to be done as to how this may affect the development of fetishes developing predominantly in men.

Cultural experience also heavily influences fetish, with Dominatrices reporting a high proportion of their 'foot slaves' being of Indian descent.

As mentioned earlier, in Hindu culture, feet and shoes are regarded as unclean, being in contact with dirt and the earth, and furthest from the heavens. Hindus avoid pointing their feet at anyone, or within the

temple – to spread their feet towards the altar or their fellow worshippers. To touch the feet is to show inferiority, so students touch the feet of their guru, the child to their parent or elder, demonstrating obeisance and subservience. Shoes are taken off before entering a temple, and swapped for wooden shoes, exchanging unclean for clean to ritual effect. The feet of the holiest people, Gods and Goddesses are sacred, and referred to as ‘lotus feet’. As Dominatrices will report, Hindu clients most often visit them for sessions dedicated entirely to ‘foot worship’, and to kissing, caressing and massaging the sacred feet of the Dominatrix.

The cultural taboos and customs offer some insight into how certain fetishes are more common in particular cultural upbringings and backgrounds, and become woven within fetish and fantasy.

Observing many fetishes and hearing many narratives of fetish, though each is individual, I have been struck with a patterning. That pattern is:

1. An encounter(s) with an arresting sight.
2. The experience is thrilling and chilling, with physical and emotional resonance (often accompanied by report of making them feel ‘funny’, stimulated, aroused).
3. Re-play and repetition fixation, at the sight (and site) of the reaction and the ‘thing’.
4. Response and gratification from reliving the thrill reinforces and reassures its effect.
5. The power of the formed fetish and its effects are venerated, and take hold in the imagination, and are sought out in proximity to desire.

In noting this ‘pathway of the fetish’, the Dominatrix herself can become an embodied fetish; an arresting (and threatening) sight, overseeing a thrilling and chilling experience with resonance. In time the sight of the Dominatrix is enough to provoke a ‘fetish effect’ in her client. By adorning herself in materiality that is favourable to fetish – ‘second skin’ rubber or leather or silk stockings, high talon

stilettos and wielding sharp implements, she combines materials of comfort with sharp points of danger and threat. She uses a man's individual fetishes as a power, and she develops further narrative layers around fetish and fantasy.

As a man is so thoroughly 'wrapped up' in his own fetish, which is an admitted over-investment and over-valuation (compared to its everyday value to others), he may often feel alone and long to share and explore his fetish with another. It is one of the reasons he seeks out and is relieved to be in the company of a Dominatrix. She not only adopts play with his fetish, but she holds up its power, sees its magic, and he feels understood. While others don't see it, She sees and understands *It*.

Closely related to this is the art of developing scenarios and narratives around the fetish – 'the fantasy'. This is something that the Dominatrix is often very adept at – creating a 'romance of the fetish', which is the fantasy role-play. In the fantasy, the fetish is showcased triumphantly, interwoven into a scene of verisimilitude and narrative plot.

Some fantasies directly replay experiences and adaptations of experiences involving the fetish. Corporal-punishment school fantasies in which a schoolboy is punished by the female teacher with a cane, with her hair in a bun, pencil skirt and white blouse, looking stern. A boy is caught masturbating to a naughty magazine by his Governess, and punished with an over-the-knee spanking, with her in pencil skirt and suspender stockings, which he gazes upon as he is punished.

Other fantasies are, well, more fantastical. An alien rubber-clad cyborg kidnapping a man and performing a medical examination and experimentation on him, stupefying him to be her human guinea pig. Or a man beached on an island occupied by Amazonian-like women who sleep in silk cocoons and keep men as slaves.

It is no surprise then that fetishes occur so frequently in films. The rubber-like shiny wet skins of aliens and womb-like cocoons (as sensory deprivation spaces) depicted in *Alien*, the *Barberella* fur (and torture scenes), the leather catsuit of Emma Peel in *The Avengers*, the

bondage garrotte chair wielded by a woman in James Bond.

The Dominatrix is herself an embodiment of the male (submissive) fantasy, formed and informed by his erotic imaginings, which fund her professional pursuits and arts as well as the material, costumes and equipment of her play.

While much of female domination emphasises the Dominatrix's power, her autonomy, her control over play; her client holds the power both to 'opt out' or cease the session by use of a safe word, and to vote with his feet in terms of who he sees and seeks out. A Dominatrix for this reason must always keep his fetish and fantasy in mind as an important part of her power in play.

Or, as one Dominatrix will frequently say to a trainee intern: 'Never forget a man's fetish. Re-invent it again, play with it, uphold it, and never tire of it ... because he never will!'

Endnotes

- 1 Wilson, A. 'German dominatrices' choice of working names as reflections of self constructed social identity', *Sexuality and Culture*, vol. 9, no. 2 (2005), pp. 31–41 (see p. 40).
- 2 Satomi Zpira in interview and performance on Friday, 18 December, at La Domaine, Lyon, France (viewable on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0o7zVo2Pbo>).
- 3 Satomi Zpira in interview and performance on Friday, 18 December, at La Domaine, Lyon, France (viewable on YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a0o7zVo2Pbo>) and Midori *The Seductive Art of Japanese Bondage* (US: Greenery Press, 2001), p. 14–16.
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Afterword

Ascent from the Underworld

Having spent much of the last four years in the ‘underworld’ of Dominatrices’ dungeons, and the dark and artificially lit interiors of museums and libraries, I have finally drawn to the end of my journey documenting the history and arts of the Dominatrix.

After all that I’ve learnt about their world and their practices, the Dominatrices have lost nothing of their mystique. I have great admiration for these highly independent, talented, and free-thinking ladies who have made domination their professional craft occupation.

In the few years since I began my journey, the dungeons of Fitzroy (where I began) have since all moved or closed down, as has Sydney’s Salon Kitty’s, signalling something of an end of an era in Australia. Like all endings, it is a beginning, too, with new houses planned to open, and the next generation of Dominatrices rising up the ranks to influence the emerging ‘scene’.

Professional domination has become as ‘out’ as it has ever been, as is ‘fetish’ attire, with the likes of Rhianna and Lady Gaga wearing latex rubber in their music videos and on stage at award ceremonies and live performances. *Fifty Shades of Grey* (which I have embarrassingly not yet read!) came along some years into my journey, and seems to have made erotic submission into a mainstream female fantasy. Yet so little has ever been written on the subject of the Dominatrix that few were aware of the professional occupation outside of the stereotypes, nor the arduous training or complex practices that these women set themselves to undertaking.

In many ways, professional domination poses a challenge to feminists who advocate an anti-sex-work perspective and would

sweep over sex work as inherently exploitative to women. As this history shows, the craft of domination seems to have grown out of rituals and worship of a powerful Goddess, to whom men brought tribute and offerings of devotion. The practices of submission, pain and ecstasy were seemingly overseen by powerful priestess figures. Amongst the earliest texts associated with a recorded author was 'Dominatrix literature' to the Goddess Inanna, linked to the high *En-Priestess* Enheduanna, as recorded on clay plaques. Later in early Greek history, we have intriguingly beautiful fragments of poetry on papyrus, in devotion to the Goddess Aphrodite by the female poet Sappho (from the island of Lesbos in the Mediterranean). The names of these influential women were known long after their deaths.

After the overthrow of the Goddesses by patriarchal monotheism, the sacred 'women's knowledge' was carried into the secular practices of female sex workers. They appear to have been 'erotic entrepreneurs' and open-minded craftswomen, who tailored their operations, tools and offerings to the deep desire of men to submit themselves to a powerful female authority figure. The Dominatrix profession may have grown out of conventional brothels, but it appears to have quickly evolved into its own highly specialised niche. For professional Domination is not about sex *per se*, but tuned to the psychosexual realm, releasing the pressure and repression of social identity, and enabling free exploration of an individual's submissive self.

Reading about some of these women in history, and their ingenious self-marketing and manipulation of their own self-constructed identity, one can't help but feel some admiration for them. From the 'Whipstresses' who kept colour-coded handles of implements to aid their clients calling for the correct rod, to the 'Birch disciplinarians' seeking to gain some control over their own self-image and the images of them with aristocratic patrons (which made them amongst the first 'celebrities' in the eighteenth century), and to the golden era of the Governesses such as Theresa Berkley, who invented equipment suited to (whipping) purpose. These women achieved financial independence and class mobility in an era in which few options were

available for women other than to 'marry up' or pursue long hours working in labour-heavy jobs.

They provided an erotic service, yes, but they also developed a highly specialised craft with its own special competencies, techniques and knowledge. And 'play'. The word 'play' is particularly important, for it points to the intuitive, responsive, experimental, theatrical, transformative nature of their work. Observing 'sessions' from the inside, it soon became apparent just why no one had broached the Dominatrix's occupation, or set to record its complexity and depth.

There is a lot of ignorance about what it is that the Dominatrix does, and she is subject to a lot of stereotyping. If there is one thing that comes across in looking at Dominatrices, however, it is their individuality and self-crafting of identity. While catering of course to erotic and commercial demand of male fantasy, Dominatrices actively construct their identity, which resonates with their own personal sense of the powerful sexual woman. They choose a pseudonym, fashion their Dominatrix 'self', set up equipment in a way that suits their own preferences – for function, display and access of their 'tools', for moody aesthetic, as an 'otherworld' space and as transformative theatre. Each brings her own interests and passions to bear on her professional practices.

When people think of a 'Dominatrix', they think of a black-leather-clad bitch. And while certainly Dominatrices do wear such attire and can act the 'bitch', the history shows that the 'bizarre' style only came about in the twentieth century, some hundreds of years into the Dominatrix's history. While in this day and era, you're just as likely to find a Dominatrix in colourful latex rubber that suits her personality, in a uniform that takes her amusement, in Victorian corsets and seamed suspender stockings, in domestic or office attire, or anything else that She damn fancies. Dominatrices do keep in mind their clients' fantasies, but there is a generous amount of her own personal taste in what she wears and her wardrobe selection.

Is the Dominatrix a feminist archetype? Well that may be perhaps going too far. She is, however, certainly not the exploited 'victim' that the feminist writers would cast all sex workers as. Interestingly,

Dominatrices are also highly represented in sex-work advocacy and rights. In South Australia's campaign for decriminalisation of sex work, many of the women working with sex workers' groups are practicing or former Dominatrices. While in Canada, the major constitutional law challenge to sex work in the case of *Bedford v. Canada* featured the Dominatrix applicant Terri-Jean Bedford (aka Madame de Sade) alongside two other sex workers, and she regularly appeared in the Supreme Court fully dressed in her fetish leather with a riding crop. The applicants in the case argued that the law deprived sex workers of their right to security by effectively forcing them to work in secret.

Dominatrices are used to habitually challenging male authority, displaying their own power and strength, and it is this experience that many have said has helped give them the confidence to be involved in challenging people's perceptions about sex work and to fight for laws that would give all sex workers rights to a safe and healthy workplace. They say that the models that criminalise sex work merely drive it further underground and into the shadows, where sex workers are unable to go to the police with any concerns or violence from clients as long as their work is illegal. Many sex workers have personally experienced police corruption, blackmail and stigma. There have been incidents in parts of Asia where women carrying condoms are arrested and have the condoms used as evidence of prostitution in legal proceedings, and so have had to go about their work without carrying condoms for fear of the police.¹

Around the world, sex workers seek decriminalisation and human rights to which all occupations are entitled. Although Dominatrices do not in general offer sexual intercourse as part of their services, they are nonetheless completely aligned with other sex workers in the fight. That fight is for a consenting adult to choose what they wish to do with their own body, to be able to undertake their work in a safe environment, have access to occupational safety and health, to pay taxes like any other citizen, and be able to contact the police without fear of prejudice, persecution or prosecution.

While anti-sex legislators argue that decriminalisation of sex work

supports human trafficking, these are as separate from each other as consensual sex is from rape. One is the choice of an individual as to what she or he wishes to do with her/his own body. The other is the trafficking and violation of the individual without consent.

Dominatrices and other sex workers advocate an 'empowered model', which emphasises the right of an individual to choose what they wish to do with their own body and freely access information and support, free from stigma and oppression.

The risk of exploitation is found in other forms of labour, such as, most recently featuring in headlines – the textile clothing workers of Bangladesh. The solution is not to outlaw textile workers. It's rather to ensure fair pay and good conditions, to ensure access to agencies who can help safeguard workplace health and safety of all workers.

As anti-sex-work reformers claim that all sex work is inherently exploitative, the stories and lives of Dominatrices show that to the contrary, female sex workers can be savvy erotic entrepreneurs, who are drawn to the occupation by their interest in sexuality, their open mind, the opportunity to operate their own independent business and to profit from their craft and labour.

Dominatrices do not invent the need or commercial demand. Submissive men intently seek out the understanding Dominatrix who can cater to their desires and 'true identity'.

The Dominatrix undertakes this role in a dedicated manner and professional approach, with special equipment designed to take the weight of their clients, and tools tailored to their job that are as specialised as in any 'craft' occupation. Interestingly, too, although there is much emphasis on the Dominatrix's ability to inflict pain, of equal or greater importance is her ability to grant mercy. She is conquerer, yes, but also redeemer and healer.

Clients interviewed in the course of this research talked about going away from a Dominatrix session feeling at peace, revived, relieved, released. They spoke of having been taken on a journey, over multiple sessions, of learning more about themselves, about their desire, about the nuances of their minds and bodies, and gaining wisdom and insight from their experience. The less prescriptive they

were, the more they tended to get out of the experience. By sharing their interests and experiences but opening themselves up to new experiences as trust was forged, they enabled the Dominatrix free reign to intuitively taken them somewhere new. The term 'going on a journey' was used repeatedly, again and again, by different clients the world over.

A great level of trust is placed in the Dominatrix by her charges, a trust which she holds sacred, with most being very caring and ethical. (Although there are inevitably a few bad apples out there.) It is an aspect of the Dominatrix's work that is rarely recognised, her compassion and mercy, which goes alongside the stereotypical 'sadistic bitch' image.

As I neared the end of writing this book, it was in Hanoi in Vietnam, on sabbatical, that I encountered the Goddess of Mercy (Kwan Am or Guanyin), who has ears to the suffering of all, and hands reaching out to help. I found it rather ironic that this book would begin with the Dominatrix Goddess Inanna excavated from deep beneath the sands of ancient Mesopotamia, and end with the living deity of the Goddess of Mercy.

The plea for 'mercy' features in BDSM sessions, in literature, and forms the 'safe word' for many slaves around the world who cry out, 'mercy Mistress'! The Dominatrix is the archetype of an all-powerful female who shows not only cruelty, but also compassion and mercy.

It is my hope that this book – despite its flaws, difficult language, its hurried private-print schedule squeezed in between academic semesters – will nonetheless help to fill the current void in knowledge on just what it is a Dominatrix does and her long-sacred history. As much as possible I have included original sources and references to enable others to undertake their own research in and contribution to this rich subject area (which has been previously neglected and buried quite literally within the underworld). From beneath ancient sands, museum storage, library vaults, archives from the fetish underground, brought to the surface, it has been an 'ascent from the underworld'.

As this book goes to print I am about to make a migratory flight

across hemispheres and into the upperworld light of day. Like all journeys to foreign lands, you inevitably acquire some souvenirs on your trip. Within my own baggage are certainly a few items brought back from the world of the Dominatrices. (Let's just hope they make it past the airport security baggage personnel.)

If anyone out there reading this book is sitting on the 'buried treasure' of Theresa Berkley's supposedly destroyed Memoirs or any other important document hidden away, please do not hesitate to contact me anonymously with material you may wish to share. This book may serve to 'rattle a few cages'. And I would relish to update the publication in ten years time and with more information and images which may be held privately in people's attics, boxes and antique cupboards.

Until then, I hope you've enjoyed this special collection of images and knowledge on the historical Dominatrix.

Anne O Nomis, 2013

Endnote

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Portrait of Anne O Nomis
© Kristyna Hessova Photographer

ANNE O NOMIS (a play on the word 'Anonymous') was born in the Antipodes. She received her Master of Arts degree in comparative art and archaeology from University College London (UCL), and works as an historian, consultant and curator on contemporary and ancient art.

Nomis undertook clandestine training in one of Australia's leading dungeons under the tutelage of some 15 Dominatrices, and pursued independent research in the British Library, British Museum and

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